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Courtesy Frith Street Gallery, London

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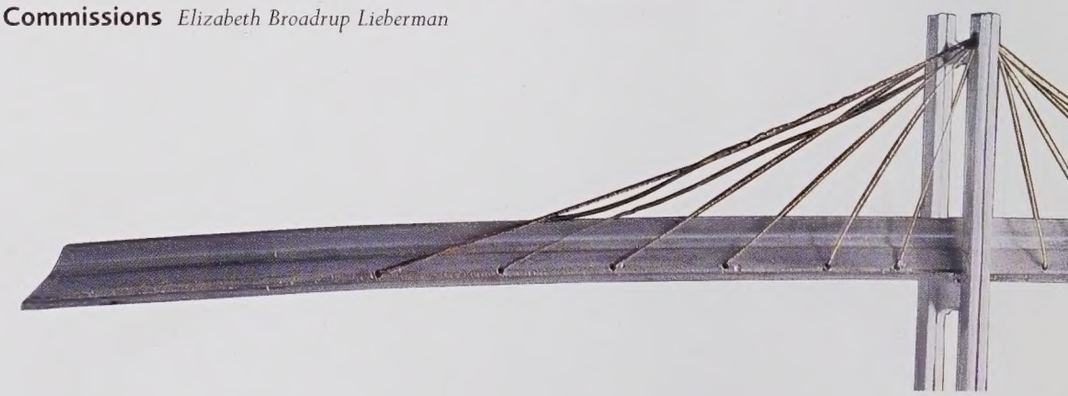

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

The three artists profiled in this issue of *Metalsmith* are all women and each has chosen metal as her prime material. At first glance, it would seem that they have nothing else in common, given their wildly differing approaches to the medium and its traditions.

Cornelia Parker, on our cover, takes a cavalier approach to metalware, and has built a career out of flattening, burying, drowning, exploding and stretching metal objects to illustrate "the destructive powers of the world." Ironically, Parker's creative transformations of second-hand items are more about revival than destruction, and she inspires our appreciation of properties—tarnish, dents, rust—that would normally repel us.

Parker's attitude toward craftsmanship is equally irreverent—she readily admits, "I'm the opposite of the craftsman. I'm not trying to hone a craft over many years, I'm almost trying to . . . undo those skills." This stance sounds like the antithesis of Marie Zimmermann, who was considered one of America's finest craftspeople during the 1930s. Hailed as a "master of a dozen crafts," Zimmermann took great pride in skills sharpened through decades of exacting labor. But as author David Cole shows, Zimmermann was also in the vanguard of her day and produced cutting edge designs that often unnerved her audience. Steeped in the truth-to-materials philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement, Zimmermann nonetheless painted over many of her metal forms to create highly controversial works.

Similarly, Vicki Ambery-Smith would at first appear to be a traditional metalsmith, making precious metal jewelry and containers based on Classical and Renaissance architecture. Her finely wrought interpretations of great buildings pay homage to her subjects, a far cry from Parker's *Drowned Monuments* installation of submerged architectural models. In a recent departure, however, Ambery-Smith has turned to the decidedly non-classical forms of contemporary architecture and has also begun a new series of bridge brooches that reveal her embrace of change.

The considerable accomplishments of Parker, Zimmermann, and Ambery-Smith are the byproduct of experimentation and fearless curiosity. As the article on Zimmermann states, one of her greatest strengths was the "courage to experiment and move her work forward." Happily, the same could be said of all three featured artists.

SR

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***Metalsmith's* mission is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalworking.**

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The conference program and exhibitions will address the intersection of the disciplines of jewelry, metalsmithing, and enameling with others including industrial design, the fine arts, and fashion. "Intersections" will be examined in the context of culture, history, and technology.

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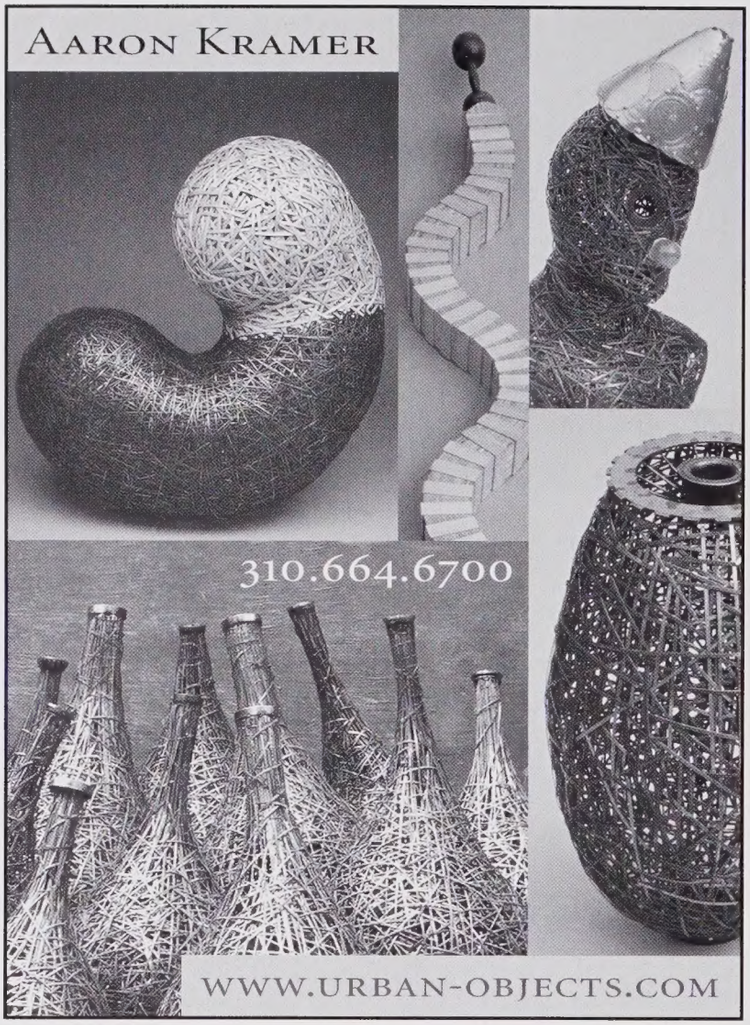

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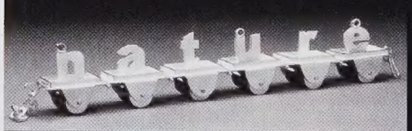

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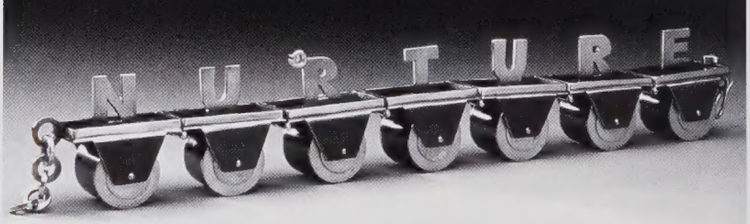

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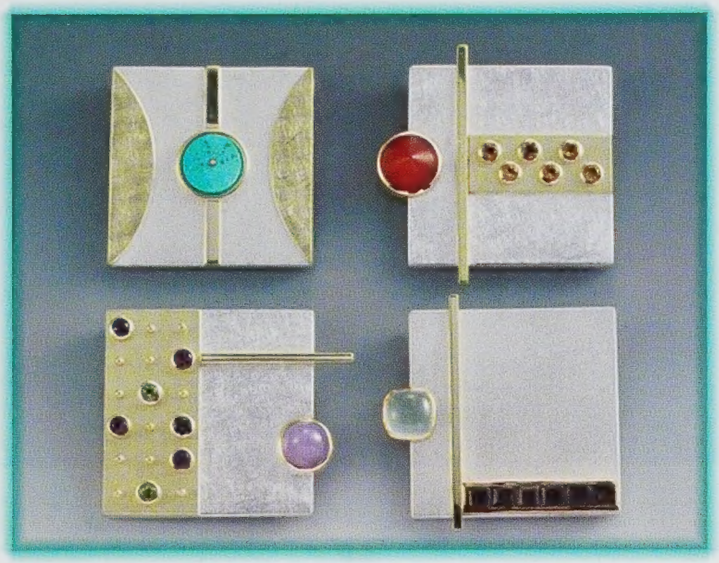

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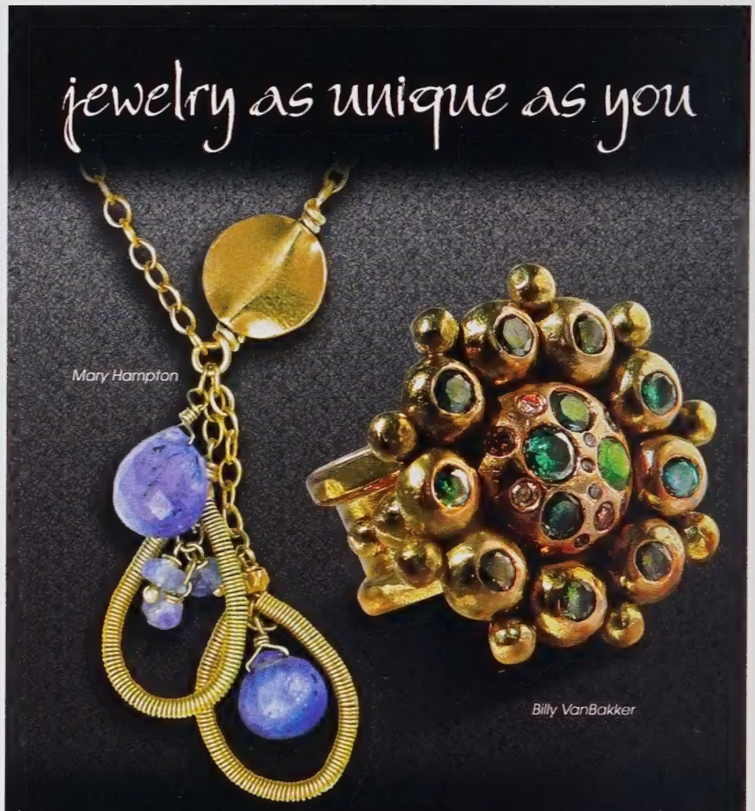

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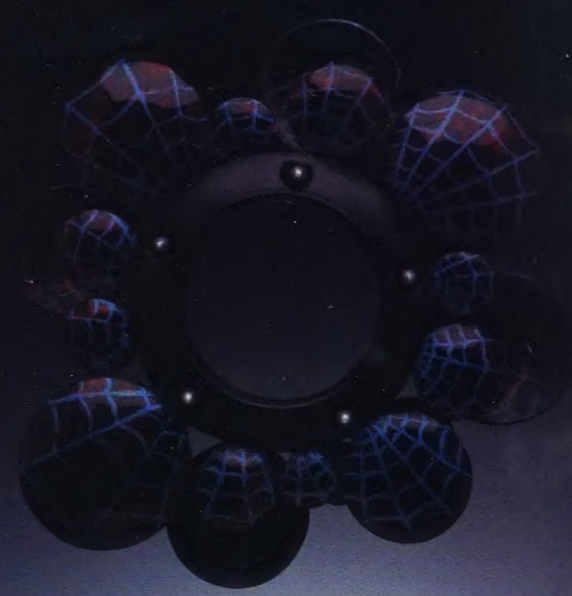

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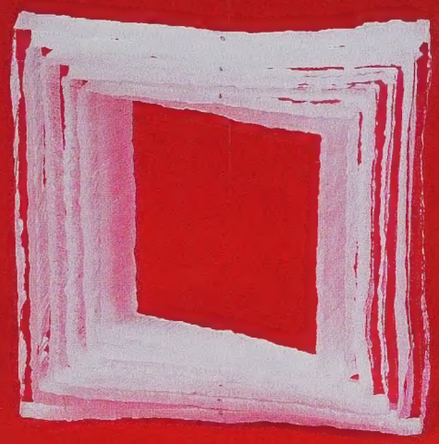

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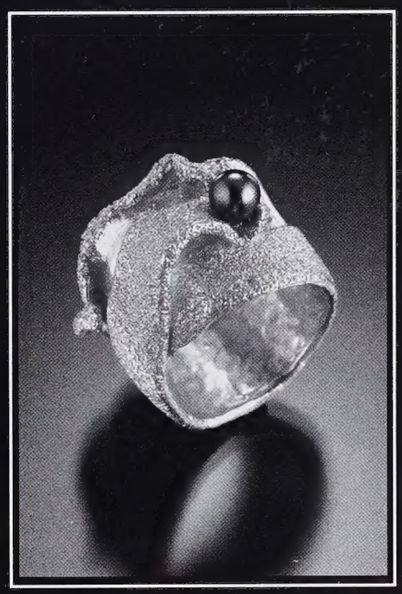

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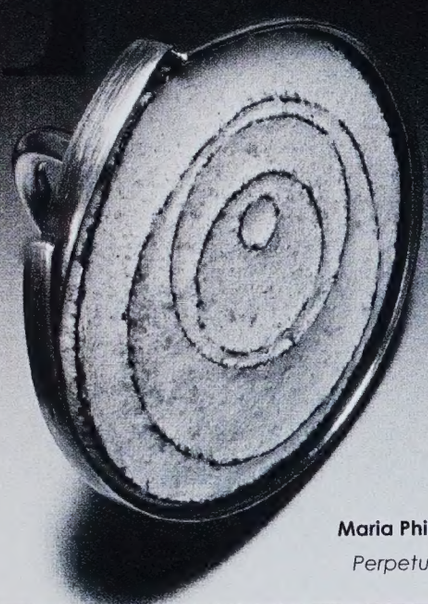

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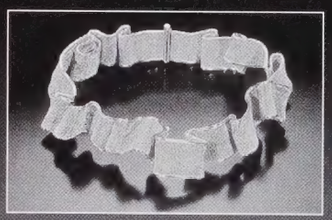

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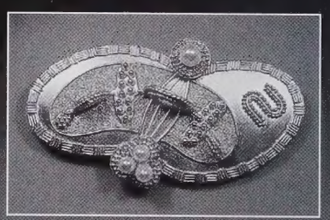

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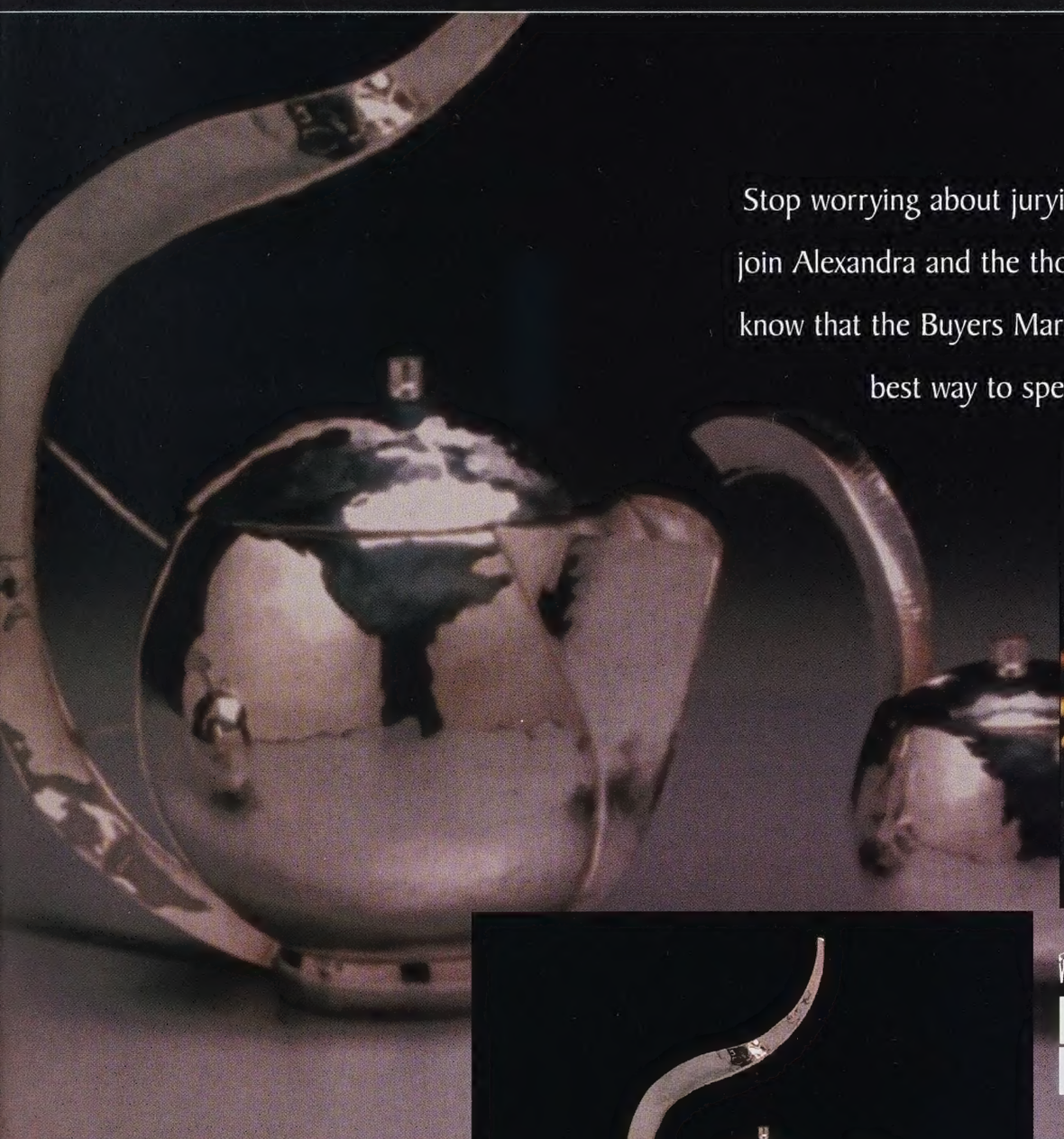

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BOOKS

Michael Rowe by Richard Hill and Martina Margetts

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in association with Lund Humphries, Hampshire, 2003

Ah Xian

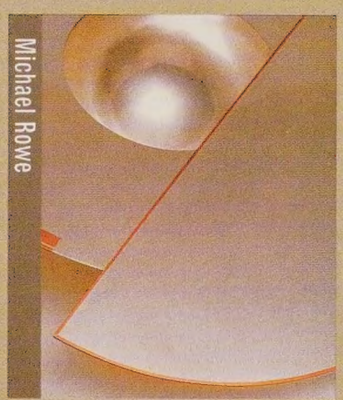
Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, 2003

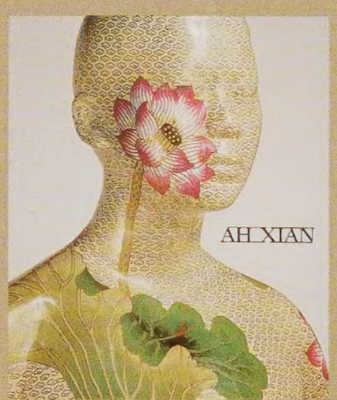
Tone Vigeland – Jewellery & Sculpture: Movements in Silver by Cecilie Malm Brundtland

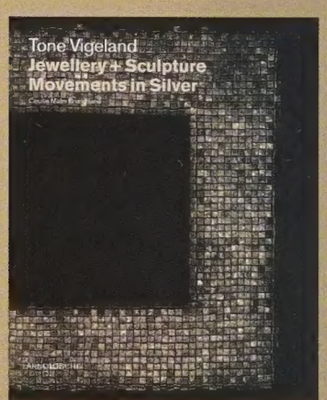
Arnoldsche Art Publishers, Stuttgart, 2003

by Toni Greenbaum

Superb monographs about three contemporary metalsmiths have recently become available: Ah Xian—a Chinese sculptor who uses time-honored practices from the land of his birth, such as pierced and/or painted and glazed porcelain, carved lacquer, jade inlay and, especially, cloisonné enamel, to create exquisite, life-size human figures; Michael Rowe—a British modernist whose "deconstructed" silver and patinated brass tabletop objects have set the standard for avant-garde holloware around the world; and Tone Vigeland, the legendary Norwegian jeweler, who combines tiny, identical units of hammered silver or steel, evocative of Viking mail and Nordic landscapes, to make both wearable pieces and large-scale sculpture.







Each is an internationally recognized artist, with a substantial presence in numerous public collections, and many prestigious awards and accolades to his/her credit. Rowe was presented with The Golden Ring of Honour for outstanding contribution to silver design by the Gesellschaft für Goldsmiedekunst from Germany (2002); Vigeland was the recipient of Anders Jahre's Cultural Prize in Norway (2002); and Xian was the principle subject of "China Refigured: The Art of Ah Xian, with Selections from the Rockefeller Collection" at the Asia Society and Museum in New York City (2002-03). Although their work might appear to have little in common, the three artists share similar approaches, rooted in the history and craft traditions particular to their native lands; and each has revolutionized custom by introducing contemporary technical, formal, and conceptual strategies to their respective aesthetics. Like Rowe, both Xian and Vigeland make "poem-things:" works where "subject and object—self and the world, content and form—are synthesized... [in] an act of...feeling and insight." [1]

Each book is organized within a suitable format, exploring the artist at hand with intelligence and sensitivity. Rowe, the most theoretically entrenched of the three, presents the greatest challenge. His oeuvre reads like a virtual survey of studio metalwork from the mid 1960s to the present. But it is his systematic investigation of the object, from the 1980s and '90s, encompassing the canons of Cubism, Constructivism, and even Surrealism, that raises the most commanding questions regarding form, structure, space, and time, thereby necessitating clear, perceptively written chronicles. Rowe's "not quite pure,"[2] geometrically-based, sheet metal objects pose ideological inquiries that touch upon obscure issues argued in German philosopher Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) discourses, particularly the dilemma of what is seen versus what is known and, consequently, the unique role accorded

objects as delineators of space and time,[3] as well as the question of function, i.e., how objects made for use correspond to high art—that which is "purposive without purpose."[4] Richard Hill's thought provoking essay, "A Cone Cut Obliquely," is praiseworthy for analyzing this complex oeuvre, while Martina Margetts's perspicacious contribution, "Strangely Familiar," places it in historical, epistemological and cultural context.

Ah Xian, published by the Queensland Art Gallery, offers several essays that illuminate the Chinese artist's cultural, political, and geographic influences. "Revitalizing Tradition," by Ian Were, enhances the reader's understanding of age-old Chinese crafts and, subsequently, this artist's place within its inevitable evolution. Suhanya Raffel and Lynne Seear's essay, "Human Human," traces Xian's artistic development under the constraints of Communism, and his eventual immigration to Australia, while Rhana Davenport's interview (plus translation and comments by Linda Jaivin) offers added enrichment.

Xian is a former painter of nude images, which were considered "morally corrupt" by the righteously conservative communist government. He left China in 1990 following the carnage in Tiananmen Square. The artist incorporates Chinese myths, symbols, and religious iconography into paradoxical sculptures that are metaphors for his journey "poised between cultures and countries...old and new... [in] an attempt to reconcile his past and present lives."[5] A most fascinating device in the book is the inclusion of photographs documenting the step-by-step creation of a cloisonné figure. Since Xian's sculptures are human structures, seeing them juxtaposed with real people—in this case, the Chinese artisans responsible for their existence—is particularly evocative. The recent trend toward liberalization and modernization in China has allowed Xian to travel back and forth between that country and Australia with relative ease. Only in his former homeland, however, can he find craftsmen who possess the skills necessary to execute the vernacular techniques required for his art. Of equal importance is continued contact with the land of his ancestors, essential not only for Xian's aesthetic sensibility but also for his psyche.

Tone Vigeland–Jewellery & Sculpture: Movements in Silver is the most comprehensive and ambitious book of the three. It is a bilingual publication, with each page containing sections that alternate between English and German. Once the reader adapts to this oscillating pattern, he/she is richly rewarded. The bulk of text is written by Cecilie Malm Brundtland, who explores Vigeland's oeuvre from the late 1950s, when she began designing for PLUS, an artists' collective in Fredrikstad, Norway, to the present day. The first essay, "Jewellery and Sculpture," is primarily chronological and developmental. Stylistic analysis is left to brief contributions, also by Brundtland, woven within the mostly single-page photographs in the "catalogue" section. This layout works quite effectively, as Vigeland's output itself is a richly layered mixture of historical, technical, and aesthetic impulses. Luscious pictures convey the tactile quality and three-dimensionality of the pieces. Although the works exist mostly in shades of grey, the photographs are printed in full color, prompting them to fairly "jump off" the paper. Some creations cover two pages, while details of others are blown up so large the overall shapes of individual designs are lost, thus encouraging readers to focus on the glorious density of repetitive elements so characteristic of Vigeland's surfaces.

Vigeland creates objects that must conform to the curves of the human body for resolution as well as free-standing compositions, which interact with the surrounding space alone. Although known primarily for jewelry, her sculptures, begun as recently as 1996, resonate with the same authority. Like the wearable examples, textures of the monumental works "strike one as being both hard and soft, alluring and menacing, protective and repellent, pleasant and unpleasant."[6] The sculptures generate a different impact than the jewelry, not only by nature of their grander scale but by their independence. Without restrictions imposed by function, Vigeland is able to concentrate on the core of her aesthetic—the marriage of morphology, medium, and method.

Contributions by Helen W. Drutt English, the well-known gallerist and scholar, as well as Cornelie Holzach, of the Schmuckmuseum, Pforzhiem, lend additional observations, both personal and profound. Holzach's insights are included in an excellent chapter titled "Balance" that probes Vigeland's relationship to the body, other like-minded jewelers, and her own sculptural statements.

All three monographs include curriculum vitae and bibliographies, essential for a thorough understanding of the makers and relevant art movements. Although the books are as different as the artists they represent—and the Vigeland and Rowe tomes match the scope of catalogues raisonnés, while the Xian book is purely an exhibition catalogue covering work since 1998—they are all triumphant efforts. Tone Vigeland, Michael Rowe and Ah Xian are three compelling but complicated artists, made lucid by well-researched, clearly written, and engaging books.

Toni Greenbaum is a New York-based art historian specializing in twentieth-and twenty-first-century jewelry and metalwork.

1 Richard Hill and Martina Margetts, *Michael Rowe* (Hampshire: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in association with Lund Humphries, 2003), 18.
2 Ibid, 35.
3 Otfried Höffe, "What Can I Know?–The Critique of Pure Reason," in *Immanuel Kant*, trans. Marshall Farrier (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 51.
4 Höffe, "The Philosophical Aesthetics and the Philosophy of the Organic–The Critique of Judgment," in *Immanuel Kant*, 219.
5 Queensland Art Gallery, *Ah Xian* (South Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2003), 12.
6 Cecilie Malm Brundtland, *Tone Vigeland–Jewellery & Sculpture: Movements in Silver* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2003), 45.

OPINION

On Belonging

by Katherine Ingraham

It is a question that comes up a lot. Like the art/craft debate or the newly invigorated discussion of what constitutes an avant-garde movement. Just what is it about those European jewelers? European work is often admired for its ability to be experimental and seemingly unconstrained while retaining a certain finesse that we suspect may be the result of intensive technical training (it turns out this is the exception more than the rule). More culturally supported, European jewelry can eschew the marketplace in a way that American work cannot and this too is enviable.

This summer, the Contact conference at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston provided a forum for immersion into this mode of making. Self-proclaimed jewelry artists from eight European countries, Canada, and the U.S. came to participate in four-day workshops, install and view exhibitions, and listen to presentations by artists who are actively exploring new ways of communicating through jewelry. The artists were: Nora Fok (U.K.), Filippine de Haan (Netherlands), Karl Fritsch (Germany), Fabrice Schaefer (Switzerland), Helena Lehtinen and HIBERNATE (Finland), and the group F.F.F.F (Estonia).

Although the work of these artists and the conference participants was diverse, I think a method of making has emerged that is clearly discernable and worth examining. Internationally, a number of jewelers are working in a way that could be called experimental or exploratory. The natural home of this type of work is largely seen as Northern Europe, but I believe the ideas are co-evolving as communication flows back and forth across the Atlantic, particularly in academia. Generalizing always fails on some level; however, some common traits can be identified.

Filippine de Haan
Hotel 275, 2004
frame from www.hotel275.net, a virtual hotel for jewelry and related imagery

Much of the work embodies a sort of fragmentary completeness, sketch-like pieces that suggest snippets of an overheard conversation. This work gains considerable strength in numbers, yet many of the small compositions are compelling individually. Part of this aesthetic is surely process-driven—assemblage incorporating a vast array of materials and techniques. The work of Kaire Rannik of F.F.F.F. is instructive in this regard. Silver, plastic, hair, mica, enamel, silk, soap, amber.... the list goes on to include 18 separate materials used to make 12 pieces, and this ratio is not uncommon. Material decisions seem intuitive, almost stream of consciousness, rather than an attempt to "subordinate the medium to intellectually interesting ideas."[1] At Contact, none of the jewelry looked premeditated, no trace of the "design and execute" mentality. Virtuoso craft that draws attention to itself was rare.

A potential pitfall of working experimentally might be to mistake process freedom for the entire conceptual concern. While breaking free of constraint is important and necessary, so is editing and one must ask what all of this work adds up to. How are a roomful of exquisite fragments meaningful? In many American galleries and exhibition spaces, I fear the answer is that they aren't particularly, except for the personal affinity a viewer might feel for his or her "favorite ones."

It is here that a striking difference between American and European jewelry snaps into focus. What I witnessed at Contact is that context is more central to European work and that, overall, more consideration is given to the way work is displayed, documented, and supported. The entire equation, not just the final result, gives the work its meaning. There is a school of thought, predominant in the U.S. and bolstered by our strong craft tradition, that a piece should stand alone on its own merits and not require additional information to be fully appreciated. Add to this the market issue of gallery sales and there is pressure for each piece to be a fully realized, wearable object, wowing the customer from its velvet-lined drawer. There is merit in this stance. However, European work that we admire is often presented in a contextual environment that unifies rather than isolates and adds a layer of meaning not available in the standard glass case.

As Manfred Bischoff said in 2002 regarding the multi-media installation of his work at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum: "the pieces of jewelry function best as half of a dialog."[2] The benefit of this view is that, if the contextual environment of the piece is imbued with meaning, it frees the jewelry from the burden of communicating everything the artist has to say. We've all seen work that tries to say it all, and ends up being less interesting as a result.

At Contact, the importance of context was communicated in several ways, from the workshop experience to the format the artists chose when presenting their own work. In her workshop titled *Whisper*, Filippine de Haan encouraged her group to explore the making of small things and find or create a

specific environment that would intensify the communicative qualities of these pieces. Students installed each other's work and as de Haan noted in her diary sketch on day 2: "We put things in better places." Anecdotally, this was initially a bit difficult for some students, who "just wanted to make stuff." Her own project, the virtual *Hotel 275*, provides a home for jewelry that is not easily categorized. This in and of itself comments on the difficulty a lot of more experimental work has in finding a place to reside, in Europe or elsewhere.

In *Correspondence*, led by Fabrice Schaefer, the context was the social conversation, a kind of contract one enters into with another maker when communicating back and forth with objects, rather than words. The act of responding through making gives the series of work meaning—the earlier analogy to hearing part of a conversation is particularly relevant. Schaefer's presentation of his own correspondence ring series (with French jeweler Cathy Chotard) inspired many participants to make commitments to do the same.

During the *Movement* workshop with Helena Lehtinen, participants were videotaped in order to identify unique, perhaps undiscovered, body language. Pieces were then made based on these observations and documented performance-style as they relate to the body. A video of Donna Veverka slowly and methodically picking off nail polish gave context to the piece that was subsequently made from the pile of scraps. The video and the object together create a more satisfying immersion into the compulsive action she chose to highlight.

So why does Europe produce more experimental, sculpturally-driven jewelry? Or does it? The sheer size of the craft economy in the U.S. means that we are inundated with images of more marketable jewelry. This may cause us to underestimate the scope and impact of more conceptual streams of work. Does it relate to a difference in teaching philosophy? Not necessarily. From talking with educators, a few things are clear. It is common for American students to prefer technical information over the conceptual. Also, faced with fewer opportunities for government-funded grants after graduation, students may push themselves to develop work that can translate easily into production. However, there has been academic crossover for years, and similar teaching concepts have found their way into universities here and abroad. The difference is not so much in the type of work we make, but in the environment it encounters once it leaves the studio. Americans are involved in plenty of experimental work that gets lost when we rely on traditional galleries to sell it to their existing collector base. By and large, European jewelers are more engaged in marketing their work in a way that seems to be a natural extension of the original process, rather than an afterthought.[3]

From a socio-political perspective, something about the American, unilateral way of life also gets mixed into the equation. The ever-increasing consumption necessary for economic growth creates a view of jewelry as commodity and encourages specialization. In his book *The European Dream*, Jeremy Rivkin describes a different cultural vision:

> *For Europeans, freedom is found not in autonomy but in embeddedness. To be free is to have access to many interdependent relationships. The more communities one has access to, the more options one has for living a full and meaningful life. It is inclusivity that brings security—belonging not belongings.*[4]

This contrasts with the American focus on personal success and autonomy, qualities we project onto our jewelry. I don't know if all the Europeans who attended Contact would agree with Rivkin's characterization, but it is interesting to note that F.F.F.F. and HIBERNATE operate as groups that support individual work while providing a structure for communal exploration (and presentation). Both *Hotel 275* and Schaefer and Chotard's correspondence series are essentially collective efforts. If there is in fact a greater emphasis in the European psyche on interconnectedness, then it is not surprising that all aspects of art-making may be more equally considered from process to context to website. If artists feel free to connect with a broad spectrum within the art world, it could also explain the relative lack of distinction between art, craft, and design.

Helena Lehtinen
Brooch, 2002
silver, porcelain, textile

Finally, where does this experimental/fragmentary/contextual type of work lead us? In a world with so much being produced, the objects themselves run the risk of becoming meaningless, or worse, nefarious in their quantity. Maybe fragmentation is the current psychological state and including contextual information with our work helps our own quest to understand where we fit in the world. Or perhaps fragments are a more realistic portrayal of what has always been true: only part of the puzzle is ever truly revealed and the human condition is to live with the mystery and uncertainty this creates.

Was Contact a turning point for American jewelry? I think of it more as a subtle shift in trajectory that will have long-range impact. Galleries, get ready to unlock those cases—the jewelry is coming out. ✖

Katherine Ingraham is a metalsmith and writer living in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

[1] From the artist-philosopher Adrian Piper's writings on conceptual art. For further discussion, see Bruce Metcalf, "The Problem of the Fountain," *Metalsmith* (Summer 2000).
[2] Patricia Harris and David Lyon, "Metaphors in Metal: Manfred Bischoff's Structuralist Jewelry," *Metalsmith* (Summer 2003).
[3] I recommend the websites www.hiber.net and www.hot.ee/groupffff for a look at the impact web design can have. In addition, many European jewelers publish limited edition books of their work, themselves works of art.
[4] Jeremy Rivkin, *The European Dream*, excerpted in *Utne Reader*, (September-October 2004): 75-79.

STUDIO

Fred Fenster

by Donald Friedlich

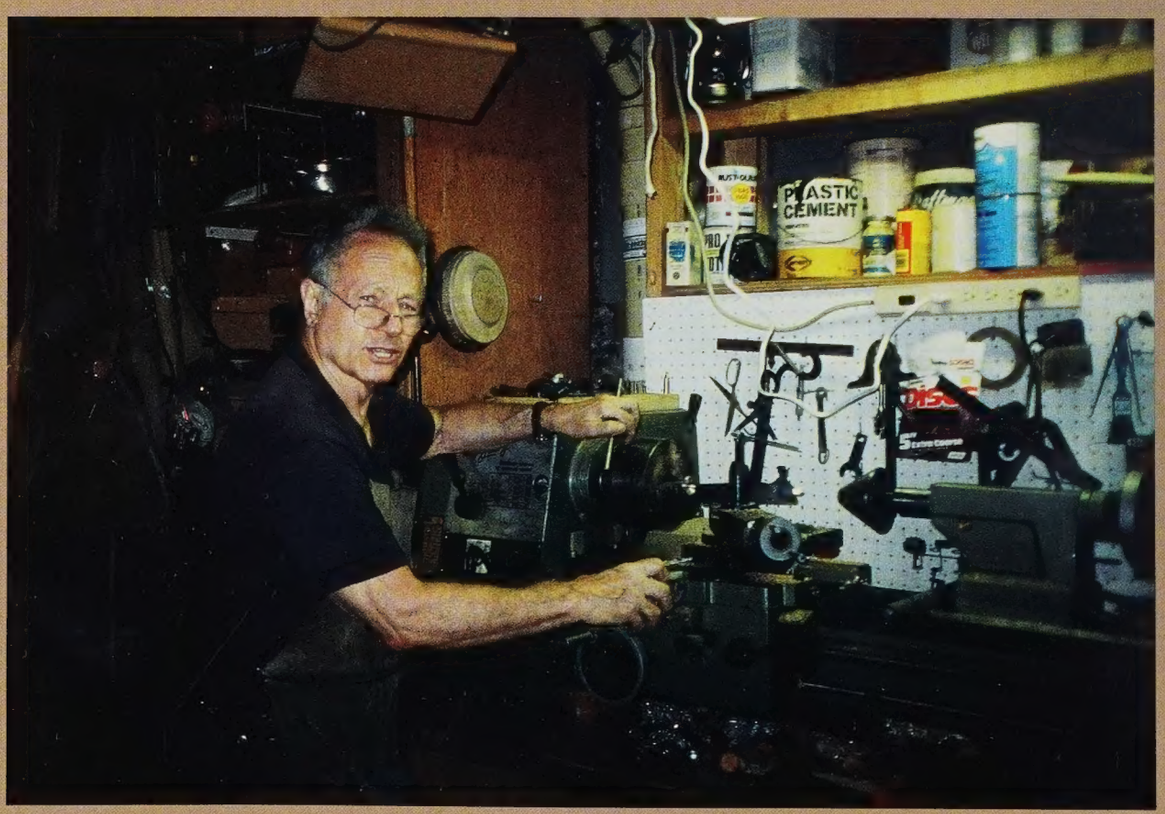
Fred Fenster's home and studio are in the town of Sun Prairie, 20 miles outside of Madison, Wisconsin. In a rural setting surrounded by acres of cornfields is the simple residence that was once the Goldenrod Cheese factory. According to Fenster, "as soon as I saw the basement, I wanted the house."

Fred Fenster's home and studio in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, 2004
Photo: Donald Friedlich

With barely a square inch unoccupied, Fenster's studio is tightly packed into that basement space. The setup reflects the breadth of his love affair with metal, with areas designated for spinning and other lathe work, forming, raising, fabrication, soldering, annealing, and polishing. He has a huge selection of hammers and stakes displayed on the wall. There's even a shower, in case work gets especially messy.

Over the years, Fenster's work has ranged from jewelry to holloware and flatware, to liturgical objects. He is at ease with gold but works more often in sterling or pewter. Today, more of his time is spent on commissions for Judaica and holloware than on jewelry. No matter what the material or technique, however, it is abundantly clear from looking at the shop and his work that the man really knows how to move metal.

Fenster's work falls comfortably into the modernist tradition. The eye travels the outside perimeter of the clean, graceful lines of his elegant forms, and is then seamlessly coaxed into exploring the body of the piece. Superfluous decoration that would interrupt this flow is seldom added. No extra icing on the cake; less is more. When a piece is intended to be functional, it's important to him that it function well, that a teapot pour properly and not dribble, that hinges move smoothly and lids fit snugly. Forms are usually geometric and occasionally

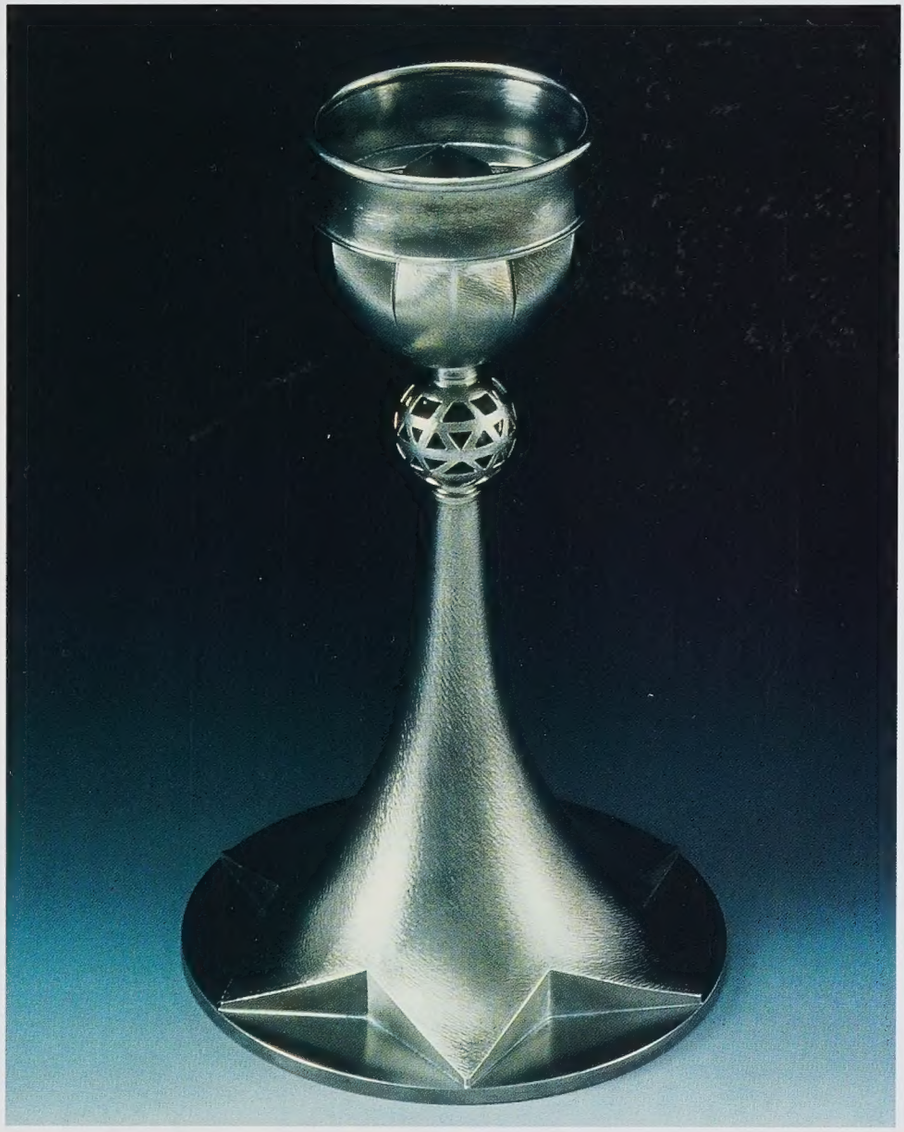


The artist at his lathe, 2004
Photo: Donald Friedlich

organic. Sometimes the two are juxtaposed within one piece. While it's hard to say that form always follows function in his work, no matter which comes first, a sensitivity to both is always present.

Fenster is especially adept at the use of scoring and bending techniques to produce unique three-dimensional forms. While sterling is well suited to this approach, it is especially effective and efficient when applied to pewter. Nowhere is this more evident than in one of his signature designs, the Kiddush cups. These cups are used in Jewish temples and homes to celebrate the Sabbath and other occasions through the ritual drinking of wine. Fenster very cleverly uses scoring and bending so that a Star of David seems to grow naturally right out of the foot of the glass. He then surprises the viewer with a second star, less immediately apparent, at the bottom of the cup's bowl. This star is first seen on the outside of the bowl as an unrecognizable abstract form. It's only visible as a star when the inside of the cup is viewed directly from the top, as one would while filling the glass with wine.

After a period as an Industrial Arts teacher in New York, Fenster went to graduate school and received his MFA from Cranbrook Academy in 1960. He attended Cranbrook with Stanley Lechtzin and Michael Jerry and counts both classmates as important figures in his development. In 1962, he began teaching at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. A gifted and dedicated educator, Fenster plans to retire at the end of the 2004/2005 academic year after 43 years at the university. During his tenure, he has shaped several generations of American metalsmiths to approach their work with professionalism and skill. After all those years, he still brings remarkable energy and passion to his teaching.



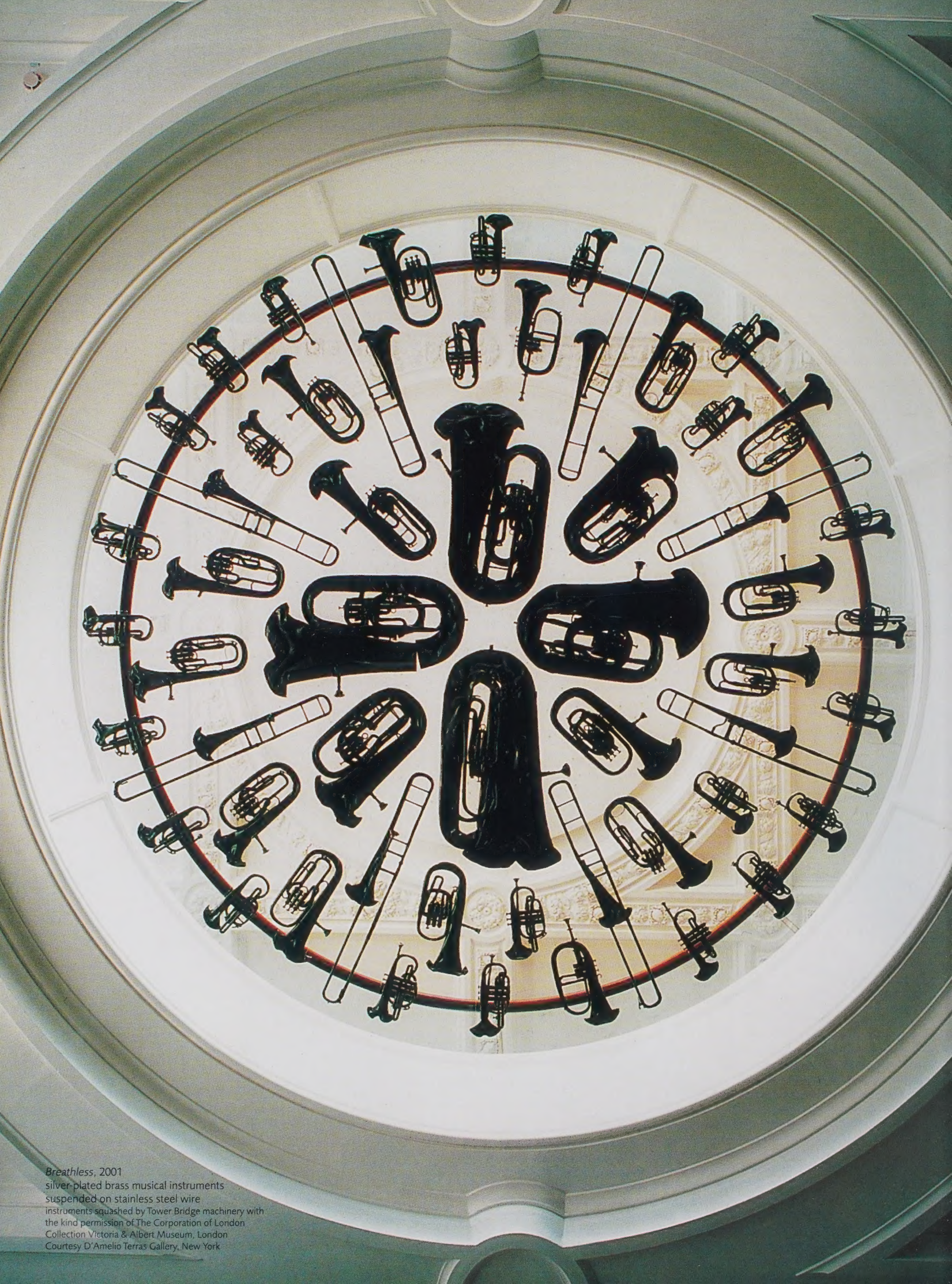
Kiddush Cup, 2001
pewter
height 8 1/2"

He has also been very active on the workshop circuit, usually teaching holloware or pewter techniques. This past summer he taught at the Appalachian Craft Center, Penland School of Crafts and at Tainan College of Art in Taiwan. His extensive travels and teaching bely his shy and reclusive nature. At the end of a long day of social contact at school, he is happy to come home to a quiet and secluded shop. It is here that he seems most at ease.

Fenster is an avid junker and frequently attends flea markets looking for unusual or bargain tools. He calls the flea markets "outdoor museums" and says he "junks to learn." This attitude is apparent in both the quantity and quality of tools in his studio. His approach to learning is an active one that requires time, curiosity, and a continuing drive to enrich his already extensive knowledge of his chosen material. One of the great things about a career in a creative area is that if you work it right, as Fenster clearly has, it can offer a lifetime of growth and learning. You can't ask for much more than that.

Donald Friedlich is a jeweler in Madison, Wisconsin, and a former president of SNAG.

Teapot, 2004
pewter
8 x 8 x 10"



Breathless, 2001
silver-plated brass musical instruments
suspended on stainless steel wire
instruments squashed by Tower Bridge machinery with
the kind permission of The Corporation of London
Collection Victoria & Albert Museum, London
Courtesy D'Amelio Terras Gallery, New York

Cornelia Parker's Fine Undoing

by Ann Wilson Lloyd

Few adults who indulged in the childhood prank of placing coins on active railway tracks have since analyzed why the practice seemed like such mischievous fun. The British artist Cornelia Parker has, and her thoughts impart insights into the appeal of her own often prankish work.

Thirty Pieces of Silver, November, 1988
work in progress
Courtesy D'Amelio Terras Gallery, New York

Parker makes conceptual installations and two-dimensional art using mundane, but socially-freighted, objects that she suspends, flattens, buries, drowns, blows up, photographs, spins into filament, or manipulates in whatever way necessary to, first, kill off their prosaic lives, and second, channel them into higher planes of existence. Alloyed with her clever, punning titles, Parker's objects, regardless how base, are ennobled through these tragi-comic trials. Starting with those childhood coins, the majority of her works are metal.

The artist has hired a steamroller to flatten a swath of silver-plated housewares, from tea sets to trumpets (*Thirty Pieces of Silver*, 1988-89). She has used the centuries-dulled guillotine that beheaded Marie Antoinette to whack sundries like a baguette, a necktie, shoelaces, and newspaper (*Shared Fate*, 1998). She has framed the dental gold of a deceased poet and called it *Poet's Crown* (1998). She has even made a piece, *Matter and What it Means* (1989), consisting of thousands of coins—suspended in the shape of a laid-out body—that have been flattened by a passing train.

In the catalogue for her 2000 solo show at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, Parker stated: "As a child I used to crush coins on a railway track. You couldn't spend your pocket money afterwards but you kept the metal slivers for their own sake, as an imaginary currency and as physical proof of the destructive powers of the world."[1]

Parker still revels in that sense of dangerous mischief. She frequently refers to the induced fate of her chosen objects—such as being run over by a steamroller—as resulting in their "cartoon deaths." But there are other layers of motivation and meaning in her work that often renders them as richly textured as literature and poetry, albeit with a satirical edge. Even Parker's earliest, post-graduate works have a clunky kind of storytelling behind them, as well as shades of social critique and art-historical debunking.

Parker, who is 48, grew up in the English countryside as a self-described childhood loner. After earning her MFA from Reading University, she spent a few months in New York in 1984. Upon her return to Great Britain, she said she felt both overwhelmed by the experience and determined to make sense of it in her work.[2]

Using a cheap souvenir of her trip, a plastic model of the Empire State building, she proceeded to cast hundreds of replicas in lead, which she suspended, like plumb lines, from the ceiling (*Falling Towers and Sinking Ships*, 1985). After she ran out of room in her studio, she placed a selection of them outside, in a puddle made by a blocked downspout drain, and photographed the little swamped city (*Drowned Monuments*, 1985).

"These cast lead works were the earliest metal pieces," Parker says. "I made them for two or three years, then thought I'd better stop, because lead is a bit bad for your health. I do love lead, it's a base metal, and has to do with things like the plumb line. I had been making all abstract work as a student, and then I rejected all that when I left college, and wanted to work with the most representational objects I could find. I became very drawn to the idea of quite clichéd things, overly familiar things, like these souvenir buildings."

Parker made molds of the tiny icons and cast them over and over, deliberately blurring their contours, so that they became more and more abstract. "I was trying to undo them in a way. The buildings became like stalagmites, more like natural objects. I was trying to destroy famous architecture, but even when they were the most abstracted, you could still recognize what they were."

Although her degree was in studio sculpture, Parker says her technical training was spotty, and that's been a good thing. "It's liberating. I started out as a painter, and missed all the courses in technique. But I like the idea of not being an expert. I'm the opposite of the craftsman, I'm not trying to hone a craft over many years, I'm almost trying to do the opposite, to undo those skills," she says, laughing.

She does have a sculptural interest in the physical qualities of metal, for the usual reasons—permanence and rigidity. But rather than building on these attributes, Parker—ever the contrarian—is more interested in undermining material integrity in whatever way possible. "I'm trying to undo that permanence, and to make metal more flexible, more pliable. Interesting things happen under pressure, like when squashing a silver teapot. Afterward, you still know what it is, but it has this amorphous quality. I'm very interested in silver, in the way it tarnishes, in all the physical properties of metals. But I obviously don't want to make anything monumental out of it...or anything useful."

The cast-lead souvenir projects, she realized, were more about process than product. "It was my way of processing an experience, trying to understand something by repeating it over and over again like a mantra until it almost wore away.

Drowned Monuments, 1985
installation in a gutter of souvenirs of famous buildings
Courtesy D'Amelio Terras Gallery, New York

Aside from the outrageous action behind the piece, viewing is a multi-sensory pleasure. The massed, smashed silver is far lovelier than any single piece moldering on someone's sideboard.

That process was really a turning point in my work."[3] The work that followed, particularly *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, now in the collection of the Tate Museum, established her reputation as a conceptual and process artist whose works are anything but dry or hermetic.

Who wouldn't be charmed (or shocked) by a room full of silver-plated, bourgeois bric-a-brac, all flattened by a steam roller, and then suspended by wire in 30 circular formations, a few inches off the floor? Aside from the outrageous action behind the piece, viewing is a multi-sensory pleasure. The massed, smashed silver is far lovelier than any

Thirty Pieces of Silver (exhaled) - Cake Stand, 2003
30 silver plated items crushed by 250-ton industrial press, metal wire dimensions variable (43" diameter)
Courtesy Frith Street Gallery, London

single piece moldering on someone's sideboard. The installation shimmers like a magical, watery vision; it also tends to chime faintly with the slightest vibration. And there's that irreverent title, with its Biblical allusion, referring to the ultimate betrayal. Like much of Parker's work, the piece is beautiful, evocative, and darkly funny.

"I've recently returned to squashing things," she says, "which I'm really happy to do; I really love it." Two recent commissions feature mundane, flattened artifacts: *Breathless* (2001), a permanent installation for the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, and *Still Life with Reflections* (2004), for a breast care clinic at Saint Bartholomew's Hospital in London. *Breathless* consists of silver-plated brass band instruments, suspended in circular formation high under a central domed ceiling in the galleries showing British art and design between 1500 and 1900. "I was asked to make a piece specifically for these galleries, where there are all these wonderful objects made by working classes for upper classes—harpsichords, violins—all very beautifully decorated. The brass band, meanwhile, is a very iconic working class Victorian institution. Every union, every colliery, every local village hall had a brass band. And now the unions have been depleted, the collieries have closed down, and few brass bands survive. It's another bit of the British Empire slowly fading away."

Parker retrieved the instruments from the Salvation Army, British Legion, and various colliery bands that have folded. None were actual working instruments, she said, but still, she says, the point is that "I'm undoing something, killing something off, and then resurrecting it." She made sure the defunct instruments had a particularly fitting death. "They were squashed by these big cylinder weights, the lifting mechanism, of the Tower Bridge, which is another British institution, another Victorian folly."

Still Life with Reflections, 2004
installation at Breast Care Centre at Barts Hospital, London
Photo: Hugo Glendinning
Courtesy D'Amelio Terras Gallery, New York

Reflections, the piece commissioned by the hospital, is subtler. Installed in a waiting room, it consists of a row of pairs of silver-plated objects, suspended just under a twelve-foot ceiling—two candelabra, for instance, one crushed, one intact. The flattened piece is suspended above its upside-down intact mate, thus appearing, like an optical illusion, as its inverted reflection.

If Parker has gained any technical skills, it's her knowledge of which silver-plated knick-knack will "stand-up" to compression. By trail and error, she has discovered that not all silver-plate is crushable. "A lot of it is very cheap and dissolves into dust. If something is cast, it just crumbles." She lost about a quarter of the earliest pieces under the steamroller, but lately, she's been using a 250-ton industrial press. "It's a big, welding, metalworking press used by construction engineers. They built this jig on it with metal plates. The pressure is huge; you can't put any cheap objects on it, they would break to bits. So I've been buying a lot more expensive objects, even though I still have a certain failure rate." Parker is careful to mangle only used silverware. Provenance, no matter how humble, is critical to her, because, "new objects haven't had a life."

Parker's objects don't always meet with violent ends. *Twenty Years of Tarnish, (Wedding Presents)* (1996) consists of two intact, silver-plated goblets, blackened with their patina of oxidized silver. Offered for squashing by a now-divorced owner, the goblets had never been polished during two decades of marriage. Parker thought their fate was already fitting, and left them alone.

She began to see tarnish as an inherent way for metal to write its own history. This led to a series of "drawings" consisting solely of *important* tarnish collected on handkerchiefs from *important* artifacts and framed under glass. A 1997 residency at ArtPace in San Antonio, Texas, introduced Parker to the Alamo, where she encountered such locally treasured items as James Bowie's soup spoon and Davey Crockett's fork, and was allowed, amazingly, to polish them. Back home, more tarnish was harvested from, among other items, Horatio Nelson's silver candlestick, Charles Dickens's silver knife, Charles Darwin's brass sextant, and Guy Fawkes's steel lantern (all 1998). While the drawings themselves are not very visually compelling, paired with their descriptive titles,

opposite page, top
Stolen Thunder-Tarnish from James Bowie's Soup Spoon (Inventor of the Bowie Knife), 1997
oxidised silver on cotton handkerchief with thanks to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, The Alamo
24 3/4 x 24 3/4" (framed)
Courtesy Frith Street Gallery, London

Wedding Ring Drawing (Circumference of a Living Room), 1996
two 22k gold wedding rings drawn into wire
24 x 24" (framed)
Courtesy Frith Street Gallery, London

Parker spins narrative gold.

The artist also spins real gold—as well as silver and other metals. *Wedding Ring Drawing (Circumference of a Living Room)* (1996) was one of her first spun wire works. It consists of a twenty-four-inch square frame holding a skein of fine wire flattened between two sheets of glass. The wire has been drawn out (by one of the expert metalsmiths she often consults) from two, melted down 22k gold wedding rings. Theoretically, it's long enough to encircle an average-sized living room, but in reality, the fine wire ended up in a tangle. In further drawn wire works, Parker took her conceptual conceit a step farther, literally deconstructing ordinary objects and then giving them a new life of heroic potential. *Three Fathoms in a Thimble* (1997), for instance, fantastically expands a tiny thimble's capacity. *Measuring Niagara with a Teaspoon* (1997) is a Georgian silver spoon, drawn to the height of Niagara Falls, while *Measuring Liberty with a Dollar* (1998) is a silver dollar drawn into a wire the height of the Statue of Liberty. Parker is currently working on a new series of drawn wire pieces called *Beyond Belief, (Unredeemed Pledges)* consisting of gold crucifixes left at pawn shops. They, like all her wire drawings, will be done in a series of six, separate works. "Each one comes out different. Some are more fluid, some all tangled up."

Whereas Parker had previously done some of her scrounging for objects with a metal detector, eBay now furnishes her with an unending supply of other people's excavated treasures.

Inspired by *Poet's Crown* (1998), Parker decided to do another drawn wire series using dental gold, called *Pulled Teeth*. While her usual haunts have always been jumble sales, junk stores, and flea markets, these recent drawn wire works have opened new doors. "I like entering these different worlds—in the pawn shops, you're in the world of gangster jewelry, the big gold medallion world. But you're entering a whole different world when you start to track down gold fillings."

The Internet has given Parker a global flea market through which to rummage. On eBay, she's bought such curiosities as iron meteorites, which she

packed into fireworks and launched over Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen (*Meteorite Lands in Tivoli Gardens*, 1996), and in an English forest (*Meteorite Lands in Epping Forest*, 1996), and a bullring, (*Meteorite Lands in Birmingham Bullring*, 2000).

Meteorite Lands in Epping Forest, 1996
firework made with iron from a meteorite
back-lit transparency
24 x 17 1/2"
Courtesy Frith Street Gallery, London

Whereas Parker had previously done some of her scrounging for objects with a metal detector, eBay now furnishes her with an unending supply of other people's excavated treasures. A new series, called *Different Dirt (Lost in America, Found in Britain and vice versa)* (2003), inspired her to play with the histories already assigned to the objects by the Internet sellers. Parker bought six assorted lots from each country—including thimbles, lead soldiers, military buttons, and something called a "pain bullet." She then scanned them, producing color images, which, along with transcripts of their Internet histories, is all that remains to be seen. The items themselves have been reburied in poetically fitting graves on opposite continents. The Civil War-era bullet with bite marks, found at Vicksburg, Tennessee, was reburied in Freud's garden; toy soldiers from North Carolina now rest in Battle, near Hastings, England. Only label text on the scanned object-portraits recounts this information. Viewers must take the reburial on faith.

"The *Different Dirt* objects travel through time and space and then become dormant again," Parker says. We too, she adds, "...are in transit, in flux."[4]

Different Dirt (Medieval to Modern), 2003
scanned objects unearthed with the aid of metal detectors/inkjet print on archival paper
8 1/4 x 10 7/8"
Courtesy Finesilver Gallery, San Antonio, Texas

"The *Different Dirt* objects travel through time and space and then become dormant again," Parker says. We too, she adds, "...are in transit, in flux."[4] Not about to give up all that satisfying squashing, Parker does seem more Zen-like; more open to metaphoric, less physically punishing possibilities. She's perhaps no longer so in thrall to the world's dangerous powers. As this recent work suggests, fate is malleable. And it doesn't take a freight train to reach that higher plane. ⧗

Ann Wilson Lloyd is a Boston-based independent critic who writes for the *New York Times*, *Art in America*, and other publications.

1 *Cornelia Parker*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (London: Art Data, 2000),16.
2 Ibid, 51-52.
3 Ibid, 52.
4 Louise Gray, "Secret History," *ArtReview* (April 2004): 87.

Matter and What It Means, 1989
coins that have been run over by a train,
suspended on metal wires over a shadow of coins
Courtesy Frith Street Gallery, London

Teapot, ca. 1920-1935
sterling silver, ivory, coral
5 3/8 x 7 5/8"

Marie Zimmermann

From Tiaras to Tombstones

by David Cole

Imagine walking into your studio and having the skill and confidence to create anything you desire. From the tiniest lady's wristwatch, surrounded with articulated platinum leaves and set with diamonds, to enormous cast-bronze doors weighing over 800 pounds, your ideas can be made any size you want. You have training in multiple media, so your art can take form in precious or base metals, in forged iron, carved wood, stained glass, or stone. You have experience designing buildings, monuments, gardens, and interiors, and the many decorative items that transform these spaces into places of transcendent living. Also, don't forget the long list of prestigious clients who highly regard your abilities and commission you to create magnificent objects to enrich their lives.

Marie Zimmermann, ca. 1945

Lady's Wristwatch, ca. 1920-1935
platinum, diamonds, silk
length 5 1/2"

This was the reality for artist Marie Zimmermann, who, by 1935, at the age of 56, was at the pinnacle of her career and considered one of the greatest craftspersons in America. Mary Fenton Roberts, the editor of *Decorative Arts* magazine, wrote:

> It might interest you to know how New York regards Miss Zimmermann's work. I think I am quite right in saying that she excels in the art of her craft in this country. She is not only the foremost worker in metals from iron to gold but is the greatest artisan in the field of beautiful home accessories and exquisite objets d'art which includes lovely things for toilette accessories, for table silver, jeweled boxes and ornaments, in fact almost anything that beautifies the home and the owner of the home.[1]

The press hailed her as a "master of a dozen crafts...perhaps the most versatile artist in this country"[2] and "the last of the great metal craftsmen...the modern Benvenuto Cellini."[3] But what they could not have realized at the time was that as impressive as her range of skills was, equally important was her ability to create significant works of art within the multiple artistic movements that swept across the United States from the turn of the twentieth century to the rise of Modernism. Her artistic curiosity and central location in New York City exposed her to the latest stylistic influences, and she fully embraced the avant-garde. Zimmermann's body of work contains outstanding examples of the Belle

Epoque, the Aesthetic Movement, the Arts and Crafts Movement, Greek and Egyptian Revival, Art Deco, and Modernism.

Marie Zimmermann was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1879 to parents of Swiss descent. She had two brothers and a sister and grew up in a home filled with culture and an appreciation for the finer things. Her father made a good living selling straw to hat manufacturers, and she was encouraged to pursue her own passions and goals through education. Zimmermann related in a 1935 interview that when she was much younger, and trying to decide if she wanted to become a physician, she saw an advertisement for a course in metalworking at Pratt Institute.[4] Against almost everyone's advice, she enrolled and was soon determined to pursue her future in the arts. She also joined the Art Students League in Manhattan, where she studied drawing, painting, and sculpture.

Zimmermann's artistic education consisted of rigorous technical training in the studio and further aesthetic development through a study of the great collections at the museums in New York City.

Brooch, ca. 1920-1935
black opal, gold, azurite, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, enamel
1 1/2 x 1 7/8"

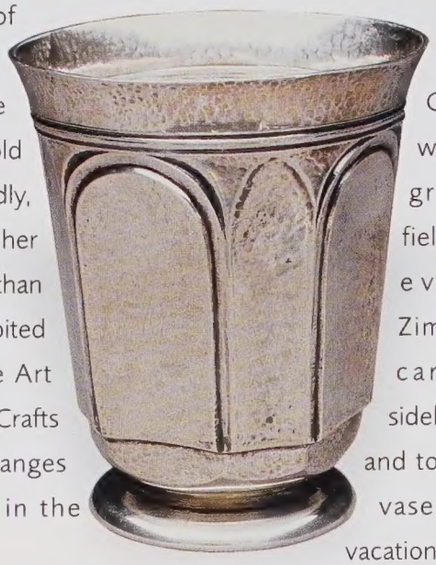
Zimmermann's artistic education consisted of rigorous technical training in the studio and further aesthetic development through a study of the great collections at the museums in New York City. Places like the Metropolitan Museum actively encouraged designers and manufactures to study pieces in their holdings to inform and inspire contemporary craftspeople.[5] Zimmermann was a frequent visitor, and particularly loved the Greek, Egyptian, and Far Eastern rooms. She later built an extensive personal library from which she could draw inspiration from great art around the world.

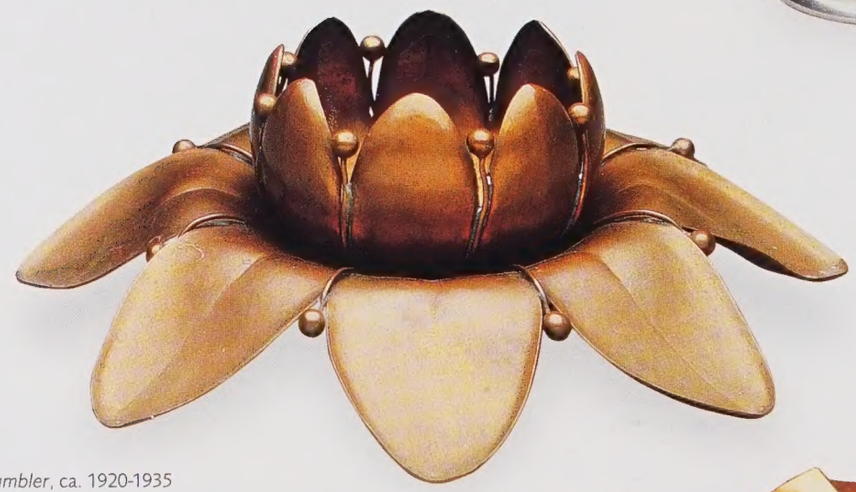
In addition to developing her personal aesthetic style, Zimmermann labored to learn the skills of making art. In response to a reporter's question of how she mastered such a broad range of crafts, she replied, "It took me 25 years, with each day of them filled with 10 to 12 hours of work."[6] To another journalist she said, "It takes work...the old craftsmen were not afraid to work until they got something perfect."[7] She admired the ancient masters of Italy, the Cellinis and Michaelangelos, and wanted to follow in their footsteps. She would later employ and train up to six assistants in her workshop, but she always executed herself the original patterns that they would faithfully follow.

A key source of the genius behind her work was that she used many of her own creations in her home. By living with her work, she understood subtle features that made her pieces usable. Her candleholders, for instance, were tall and very narrow at the stem, so that dinner guests could see one another across the table. The same candlesticks came with inserts to accommodate differently sized tapers so an owner of her work wouldn't have to shave off candle wax to make it fit. One of her magnificent centerpieces used a central metal frog that held individual flowers, and each holder was drilled so that water could flow into all the separate compartments at once. When Zimmermann began extensive use of Rhodium plating on her work, it was in an effort to free her clients from the drudgery of constantly polishing silver so they could enjoy using the pieces every day.

Centerpiece ca. 1920-1935
gold plated and lacquered bronze
8 5/8 x 15 3/4"

The earliest record of work exhibited by Zimmermann is the First Annual Arts and Crafts Exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago, held December 16, 1902 to January 10, 1903. She showed two pieces: a pin in gold and mosaic and a bookplate. Sadly, there is no further record of her artistic progression until more than nine years later, when she exhibited four pieces of jewelry for the Art Institute's Tenth Annual Arts & Crafts Exhibit. A number of major changes had obviously taken place in the interim. One significant influence during this period was her membership in the National Arts Club in New York City. This prestigious institution, located in the historic Tilden Mansion on Gramercy Park, was founded as a gathering place for artist and patrons, to help foster an American artistic sensibility.[8] With members like William Merritt Chase, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Alfred Stieglitz and three United States Presidents, it must certainly have been an honor for a young artist in her early thirties to be invited to join. After establishing her studio in some upper rooms, Zimmermann remained there for the next 25 years. For her customers, this location—with its downstairs parlors and music room, exhibition gallery and large stained glass dome—suggested that Zimmermann had already reached the higher levels of the American art world.





Tumbler, ca. 1920-1935
sterling silver
4 3/8 x 3 1/2"

Lotus Finger Bowl, ca. 1920-1935
gold plated and lacquered bronze
3 x 9 1/4"

Fluted Dish, ca. 1930-1935
gold plated and lacquered bronze
2 3/4 x 10 1/2"

Her manifold skills had by age 33 developed to a point where she, alone, designed a large and gracious family vacation home in Pike County, PA. Today, that home is an historic site, displaying much of the rustic elegance associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement. The house, with its exposed beams, sweeping grand staircase and conical, fieldstone-turret entrance, was eventually filled with Zimmermann's work, including carved wooden tables and sideboards, forged fireplace screens and tools, chandeliers, candelabras, vases, and fountains. The family vacationed there and she relished the outdoors, pursuing her love of hunting, fishing, and riding horses. Naturalistic forms like leaves, berries, vines, and flowers were always significant design motifs in her art, and the time she spent in Pennsylvania was a source of inspiration.

Zimmermann's early work was very much in the tradition of the Arts and Crafts movement. The three institutions that educated her—Pratt, the Art Students League, and the National Arts Club—were all founded as part of a reaction to the perceived decline in the quality of life that was associated with the increase in industrialization and anonymous machine-made products. Proponents of the movement believed authentic processes, honesty of materials, and a refinement of ornament would help connect the user of an article with the essence of that object and its maker, enriching the lives of both parties. Much of the inspiration for this movement came from a look back to the Middle Ages, with its strong, pure forms and organization of workers into specialized guilds. Zimmermann's sterling silver tumbler is a perfect example of this

interest in Medieval and Gothic design. Its simple lines and almost architectural proportions impart a rugged practicality that suggests everyday use. The fact that the planishing marks were left on the surface also hints at the way the piece was made and its connection with the hand of the artist.

In other pieces, Zimmermann sought to refine the essence of form and loosen the weight of the line. The Aesthetic Movement drew inspiration from the Japanese designs that reached the Western art world after Commodore Perry's 1854 treaty with Japan. Zimmermann's gold plated and lacquered lotus finger bowl is a wonderful example of her fascination with the Far East. She had many contacts with antique dealers in China, and she imported pieces of old, carved jade and hard stone. She used these as inspiration for her pieces, often combining them with semiprecious stones and using them as finials on raised or constructed containers and vessels.

As she continued to experiment with form, Zimmermann began to acknowledge in her work the lack of symmetry and imperfections in nature. She raised bowls that looked like dried and curled maple leaves. The precious and semiprecious stones she used were frequently cut irregularly, or simply roughly tumbled, referencing the truer shape of natural rocks. One cast bronze vessel is perhaps her best example of capturing the essence of Art Nouveau's full embrace of the cycle of waxing and waning in nature. The frog and flowering vine are highly stylized and become almost a gesture on the form of a gourd that has just passed its peak and is beginning its return to the soil.

Within Modernism, the final distillation of form and line dispense with the figure altogether. There is no applied ornament or design, there is only the shape itself. The clean lines, bold color, and elegant shape of Zimmermann's gold dish, probably made in the mid 1930s, fully embodies the Modern ideal. It is not minimalist, because it is still highly designed with a form that articulates a point of view. But it is pure, with little evidence of how it was made or if it is to be "used" at all. This piece represents how far Zimmermann would take her skills of traditional metal raising, making them relevant to an age that was consciously trying to break with the past and find new forms of expression.

It would be a mistake to assume that all Zimmermann's work can be placed on a rigid timeline that follows the changing tastes of this country in the first half of the twentieth century. She felt comfortable working in all manner of styles, and her most cutting edge designs were often the least popular. In 1921, Zimmermann exhibited several metal bowls at the Boston Society of Decorative Art. These pieces were ahead of their time—she employed techniques that are still controversial today. She used pigmented wax and paint over a patinated surface, completely hiding the metal beneath. Today, these pieces are undeniably striking, and the blue bowl is part of the collection of Boston's Museum of Fine Art, but it was not acquired until some 60 years after its initial display. At the original showing, not a single piece sold.

Despite the tepid reception in Boston, there was much enthusiasm for Zimmermann's work in the rest of the country. The very next year she exhibited pieces at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's

Vessel, ca. 1920-1935
cast and patinated bronze, gilding
11 1/2 x 6 3/4"

In Modernism, the final distillation of form and line dispense with the figure altogether. There is no applied ornament or design, there is only the shape itself.

Contemporary Art display, where a covered silver container decorated with garlands and rubies was purchased for their permanent collection. She subsequently showed at the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts and the Ehrich Galleries of New York City. In 1924, two more shows featured her work, including an exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago, where she was awarded the Logan Prize for her jewelry and silverware.

Blue Bowl, 1921
patinated bronze, blue pigment
3 1/2 x 6 7/8 x 15 1/4"

Red Vase, 1921
patinated bronze, red pigment
7 1/2 x 10"

Green Vase, 1921
bronze, verdigris patina
7 1/2 x 7 x 11 1/2"

This national recognition, in addition to highly laudatory articles in several eminent papers, guaranteed that Zimmermann's name captured the attention of many of America's most prominent families. After the Chicago show, she was commissioned by both Mrs. Montgomery Ward and Mrs. James Ward Thorne to build two large sets of bronze gates for their family mausoleums. In a letter to Mrs. Thorne, Zimmermann described them as "something entirely new and built as a great big piece of jewelry." The bronze surfaces were polished "so that it looks like a piece of old gold, very much aged and darkened in spots, but still almost gold color."

The pieces were cast at the Roman Bronze Works of Brooklyn, New York, then the leading American fine arts foundry. They cast original work for such preeminent sculptors as Saint-Gaudens, Remington, and Russell. The founder, Ricardo Bertelli, was considered the leading bronze expert in this country, and wrote to Zimmermann: "I hope you will be able to convince your client that this door is the only one ever produced in this manner and is absolutely unique in originality and execution, impossible to be duplicated at any cost." When the doors were finished, they were exhibited at P. Jackson Higgs Gallery in New York.

Marie Zimmermann was now very much in demand. Clients came to her studio to browse

She combined unusual materials with qualities she admired rather than selecting only those with the most inherent value.

Thorne Memorial Gates, 1924
cast and patinated bronze
135 x 75 1/2"

Metz Shrine, 1934
marble, glass, mosaic, cast and patinated bronze
overall: 132 x 120"

through her collection of imported Asian antiques and textiles and see her original work on display and in use. Zimmermann would do special one-off commissions, like a golden riding spur, encrusted with gems, for a woman who loved horses, or design an entire living room with custom furniture and decorative iron. She made both elaborate objets d'art, like fans of dyed ostrich feathers, gold, ivory, and emeralds, and modest household objects, such as plant stands of patinated cast bronze. She combined unusual materials with qualities she admired rather than selecting only those with the most inherent value.

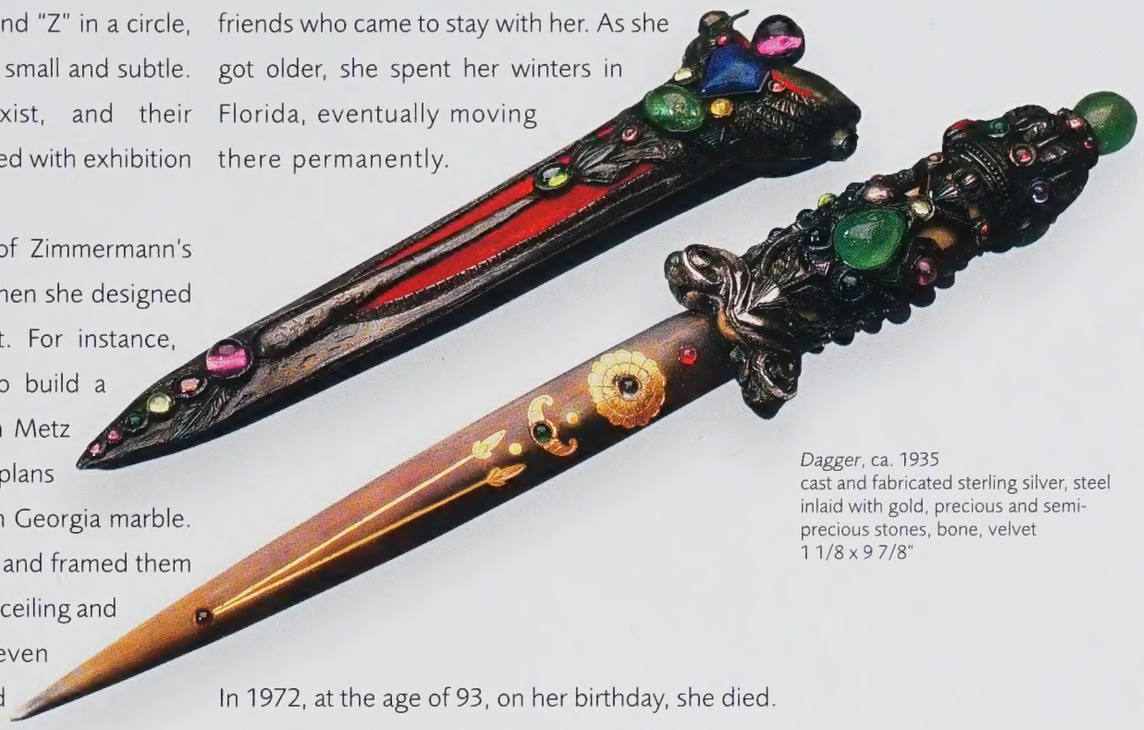
Many of Zimmermann's vases and bowls were not raised by hand but rather spun with a lathe. The forms would then be chased, on the inside and outside, and the edges trimmed. Her signature use of color surface treatment transformed these objects into bold, modern, and affordable decorative accents. Working in this manner, with her several assistants, allowed her to produce a tremendous body of work. There are probably

Egyptian Chest, ca 1935
carved and polychromed wood,
ivory, cast and patinated sterling
silver, amethyst
10 1/4 x 8 1/4 x 12 1/4"

several thousand of her works in various homes around the world. She usually signed her work with a stamp bearing the legend "M. Zimmermann, maker," or a superimposed "M" and "Z" in a circle, but sometimes these marks were small and subtle. Many unsigned examples exist, and their provenance can only be established with exhibition photographs and inventories.

The most exciting examples of Zimmermann's mastery are the rare occasions when she designed every detail of an environment. For instance, when she was commissioned to build a memorial shrine for the Rudolph Metz estate, she drew up the building plans and supervised its construction in Georgia marble. She made custom glass windows and framed them in bronze. She designed a mosaic ceiling and gates for the entrance. She even planned the landscaping and decorative plantings around the structure. It would seem that there was nothing Marie Zimmermann would not apply her hand and eye to making.

life, like reading, which she did voraciously. Among her papers was found a guest book that was filled with happy memories from the many friends who came to stay with her. As she got older, she spent her winters in Florida, eventually moving there permanently.



Dagger, ca. 1935
cast and fabricated sterling silver, steel inlaid with gold, precious and semi-precious stones, bone, velvet
1 1/8 x 9 7/8"

In 1972, at the age of 93, on her birthday, she died.

Marie Zimmermann was an accomplished artist whose achievements are still not fully recognized by modern scholarship. Her unrivaled mastery of so many crafts is certainly of tremendous importance,

Zimmermann's greatest strength was her embrace of the changing tastes in American art, and her courage to experiment and move her work forward.

But at the height of her career, her personal life began to etch away at the force that had so strongly driven her to work. Within five years of the death of her mother in 1933, her father and all three siblings had also died. Zimmermann was overcome by deep depression and bitterness.

At the end of 1937, she gave up her lease on the Gramercy Park studio and the following year she moved to the farm in Pennsylvania. Her pieces were still shown for a few more years in places like Santa Barbara, the World's Fair in New York City, and the Golden Gate International Exhibition, on Treasure Island, San Francisco. But Zimmermann essentially retired, and lost interest in making any more work. She surrounded herself with art she had done in the past, but now spent her time riding, hunting, and fishing.

Her retirement allowed her to relax her rigorous schedule and enjoy some of the simpler things in

but what is perhaps rarer is an artist with the ability to transcend a specific period of work or style and continue to make monumental contributions to the field. Zimmermann's greatest strength was her embrace of the changing tastes in American art, and her courage to experiment and move her work forward. ✠

David Cole is a practicing artist and founder of Svartvik Metalworks, Ltd. in Oakland, California.

1 M. F. Roberts to Robert N. S. Whitelaw, Director of Gibbes Memorial Art Gallery, Charleston, SC, February 27, 1935.
2 Harriette Ashbrook, "Woman Master of a Dozen Crafts," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 6 June 1926.
3 Frank B. Gilbreth, "Female Cellini Shows Art Here," *News and Courier*, March 1935.
4 Ibid.
5 Wendy Kaplan,"The Art that is Life," in *The Arts & Crafts Movement in America, 1875- 1920* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 270.
6 Ashbrook, *Brooklyn Eagle*.
7 Gilbreth, *News and Courier*.
8 National Arts Club website (www.nationalartsclub.org).

Temple of Jupiter (brooch), 2000
silver, red, and yellow gold
2 1/4 x 2 3/8"

The Architectural Portraits of Vicki Ambery-Smith

by Deirdre O'Day

In London in the late 1670s, with the enthusiastic support of King Charles II, a large stone gateway embellished with sculptures of British monarchs was built on Fleet Street as a ceremonial entrance to the City of London. Known as Temple Bar, it was attributed to the architect Sir Christopher Wren. In 1878, it was sold for £1 and removed from its City location and installed as the entrance to a country park. In November 2004, it is to be re-located stone by stone nearby its original location. To commemorate this historic occasion the British jeweler and silversmith Vicki Ambery-Smith has designed and fabricated a brooch in silver based on the monument.

Condiment Set: Ibn Tulun, Egypt, 2000
silver with red and yellow gold plate and blue glass liner
salt (octagon): 2 1/4 x 2 3/8"
pepper: 4 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2"
mustard (square): 3 x 1 3/4 x 1 3/4"

For nearly 30 years, Ambery-Smith has been using architecture as an inspiration for her work. Her name has become synonymous with finely wrought precious metal jewelry, boxes, and condiment sets whose inspiration lies in Renaissance, Palladian, and classical architectural precedents: a pendant based on the fifteenth-century Florentine architect Brunelleschi's lantern, for example, or the *Temple of Jupiter* brooch, an exercise in pure classicism. Her work is represented in galleries, museums, and private collections in Europe, the United States, and around the world. Although architecture has proved to be a matrix for her creative life, she has never considered it seriously as a profession for herself. On the contrary, as a child she was more interested in theater design. Never having studied architecture, Ambery-Smith feels her understanding of the subject has always been an "observational" one, and that it has changed significantly since she first started making architectural jewelry. She knows more now "just from dwelling in it."

From childhood, Ambery-Smith was always a maker rather than a painter and her inate three-dimensional conception of things extended to her drawings. She made Elizabethan costumes for her Barbie dolls and at 16 carved a chess set from a broom handle. Her actual introduction to jewelry-making was rather unconventional. Her first tutor was her dentist father, who, with his dental tools and the gold he had for his work, enjoyed making jewelry for his wife. He passed that pleasure on to his daughter, whom he instructed in the rudiments of the art.

At the age of 20, while in Germany on a college exchange at the Schwäbisch Gmünd Fachnochscule, Ambery-Smith visited Salzburg, and her interest in architecture was aroused by the buildings there, especially eighteenth-century ones. She explored the city, studying and drawing the buildings and extracting designs. The Baroque

Four Earrings, 2001
silver, gold
3/4 x 1/2"

On her return from Germany, her tutors were at first unimpressed and suspicious about her ideas and assumed that she was simply recreating a German jeweler's work.

Holy Trinity church, with its onion-shaped dome that dominates the city's skyline, had a particular impact on her. She had grown up in Oxford, "the city of dreaming spires," and feels that this may have had a subliminal rather than a conscious effect on her. Salzburg brought this to completion. Her time there in 1975, and her exposure to the Andrea Palladio exhibition in London that same year, proved to be a turning point, and marked the beginning of her creative relationship with architecture.

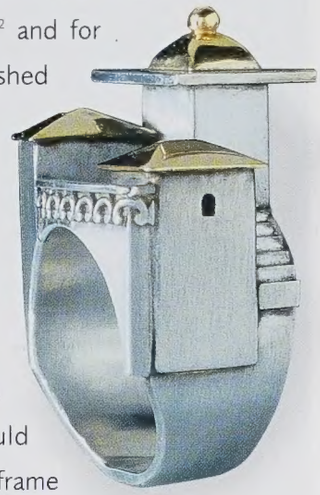
By 1975, Ambery-Smith had already completed a foundation course at the Oxford Polytechnic and was in the penultimate year of her jewelry design course at the Hornsey College of Art in Middlesex. Its graduates were some of the most innovative jewelers of her generation and the college became known for nurturing its students' individuality.

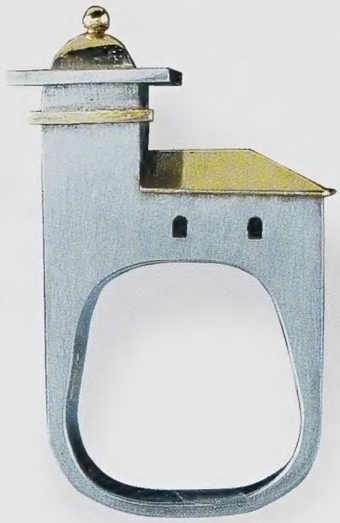
On her return from Germany, her tutors were at first unimpressed and suspicious about her ideas and assumed that she was simply recreating a German jeweler's work. After graduating, she spent four days a week in a factory making charms, bracelets, and sovereign rings, and gaining some practical experience of commercial restraints and production techniques. In her free time, she produced her own work on a workbench she set up in her bedroom, somehow managing to scrape enough money together to buy the precious metals she needed. Within a year, she had built up a sufficient collection of pieces to present to her prospective audience. Once seen there was an immediate and positive reaction to her work, with commissions and invitations to exhibit. Then a great step forward came in 1977 when the British Crafts Council sponsored a tiny studio for her and she was able to devote herself full-time to making her own jewelry. Her first show in that year was largely inspired by the Oxford buildings of her childhood and from that point on she never really looked back, as her crowded curriculum vitae attests.

The influence of architecture on Ambery-Smith's designs is profound, but it imposes its own constraints. Jewelry functions, after all, as an adornment of the human form. As such it is a miniature art, conceived primarily in two dimensions, and any piece of jewelry must be designed to lie comfortably across or depend from the body and work with it as it moves. Three-dimensional, architectural structures must therefore be transmuted to fit these criteria, and pared down to a near lilliputian scale. As Ambery-Smith melds the disciplines of architectural design

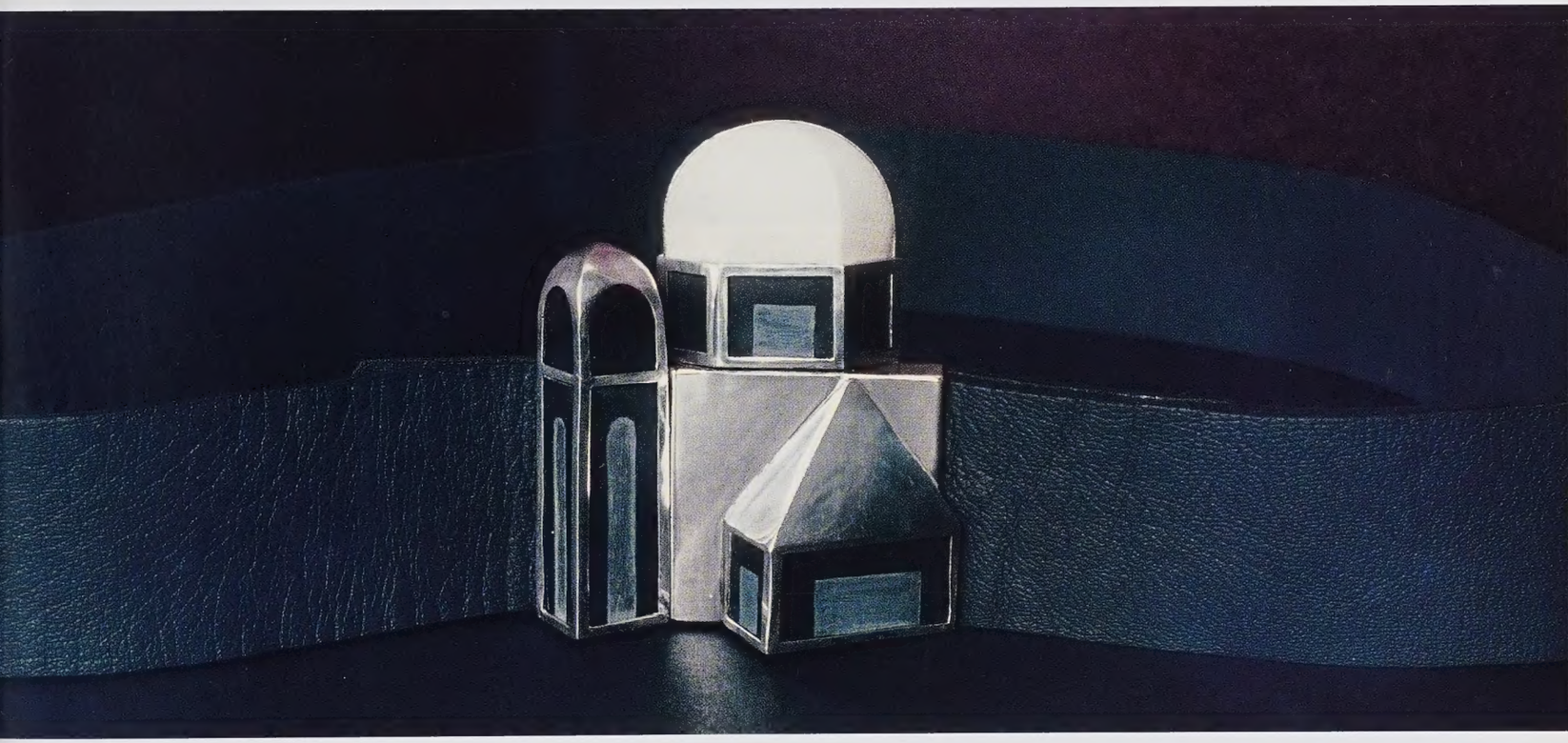
and practical jewelry construction, she must deal with the salient problems arising from the drastic reduction in scale of the given building, while maintaining its balance, proportion, and aesthetic. But she strongly disagrees with those who see her work as miniaturization *per se*. To her it is portraiture, an interpretation based on a subjective view, and in some cases an evocation of a building, rather than a literal model. "For my architectural designs I rely upon pure observation to play with deception in perspective and proportion. Reducing a building on an exact scale would be mere miniaturization; I want to go beyond straightforward representation to a more personal interpretation of the character of the building."[1] It is a disappointment to her that she finds that the work of some of her favorite architects, among them Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Antoni Gaudí, does not readily transfer to jewelry. Various conceptual problems and complications are associated with reducing their buildings down to her scale and removing them from their natural context, and she fears that this process would inevitably deprive the buildings of their "essence."

The scaling down of buildings is of course a crucial problem that Ambery-Smith must constantly address. Perhaps, in the words of Professor David Watkins of the Royal College of Art London, her work is simply "architectural forms modeled into jewelry"[2] and for this there are distinguished precedents in jewelry history. Ambery-Smith constructs silver earrings in the form of Gothic windows, for example, where a medieval jeweler would use a similar means to frame the Virgin or a Crucifixion on a pendant, and his Renaissance counterpart would create a contemporary architectural framework in which to enclose classical figures.[3] She feels able, as these earlier jewelers did, to borrow freely from an architectural whole for her own use, be it a section of a house façade, a rooftop, or a gazebo, to form pendants, stick pins, and cufflinks. Similarly, substantial silver rings are surmounted by gold Russian onion domes and moorish towers pierced with windows. One, topped with a tightly composed village comprising bridge, tower, rooftops and a flight of steps, echoes sixteenth-century Jewish marriage rings with a temple or synagogue placed four-square on their bezels.[4] Architect John Rae was reminded of Ambery-





Two Rings, 1999
silver, red, and yellow gold
1 1/4 x 7/8 x 1/2"; 1 3/8 x 1 x 3/4"



Belt Buckle (based on Salzburg church), 1976
silver, ivory, slate
3 x 3"

Globe Theatre (brooch), 1990
silver, red, and yellow gold
width 2 3/8"

...she is pleased to count architects amongst the collectors and admirers of her work. They often have their buildings recreated as a piece of her jewelry for their wives.

Smith's work when studying the silver *reredos* in the Opera del Duomo in Florence, where the silver had been modeled into representations of architecture. He also noted the formal problems of adapting architectural structures to jewelry, given that architecture exists as an enclosure as well as an outward form.[5] Ambery-Smith approaches this challenge by implying the inner space through windows and door openings; by using the architectural methods of plan, section, and elevation; and by partly cutting away the frontal wall, thus creating an actual inner space within a structure of walls, floors, columns, and staircases with space flowing through them.

This technique has been particularly successful in the larger pieces of complex construction, such as the Globe Theatre brooch which has attracted so much attention. It had been the dream of the late American actor Sam Wanamaker to reconstruct the Elizabethan Globe Theatre, Shakespeare's London playhouse, on its original site on the south bank of the Thames. By the 1980s, plans were well under way, and Wanamaker, impressed by Ambery-Smith's work, approached her with the proposal that she make a silver and gold model of the original Globe. This developed into a lengthy process as they worked together on successive versions as the plans for the building changed; these prototype "mistakes" are now highly prized and much sought after. The final version showed three-quarters of the "wooden O" cut away to reveal the interior, with a partial view of both stage and seating. Eight brooches based on the model were produced for especially generous donors to the projected theatre, each one individually made and with slight variations. Prince Philip, Patron of the Shakespeare Globe Trust, was presented with a model of the theatre at the 1985 ground-breaking ceremony when the first oak beam was put in place by the American magnate Armand Hammer, who had pledged considerable sums of money to the project and had encouraged others to follow suit.

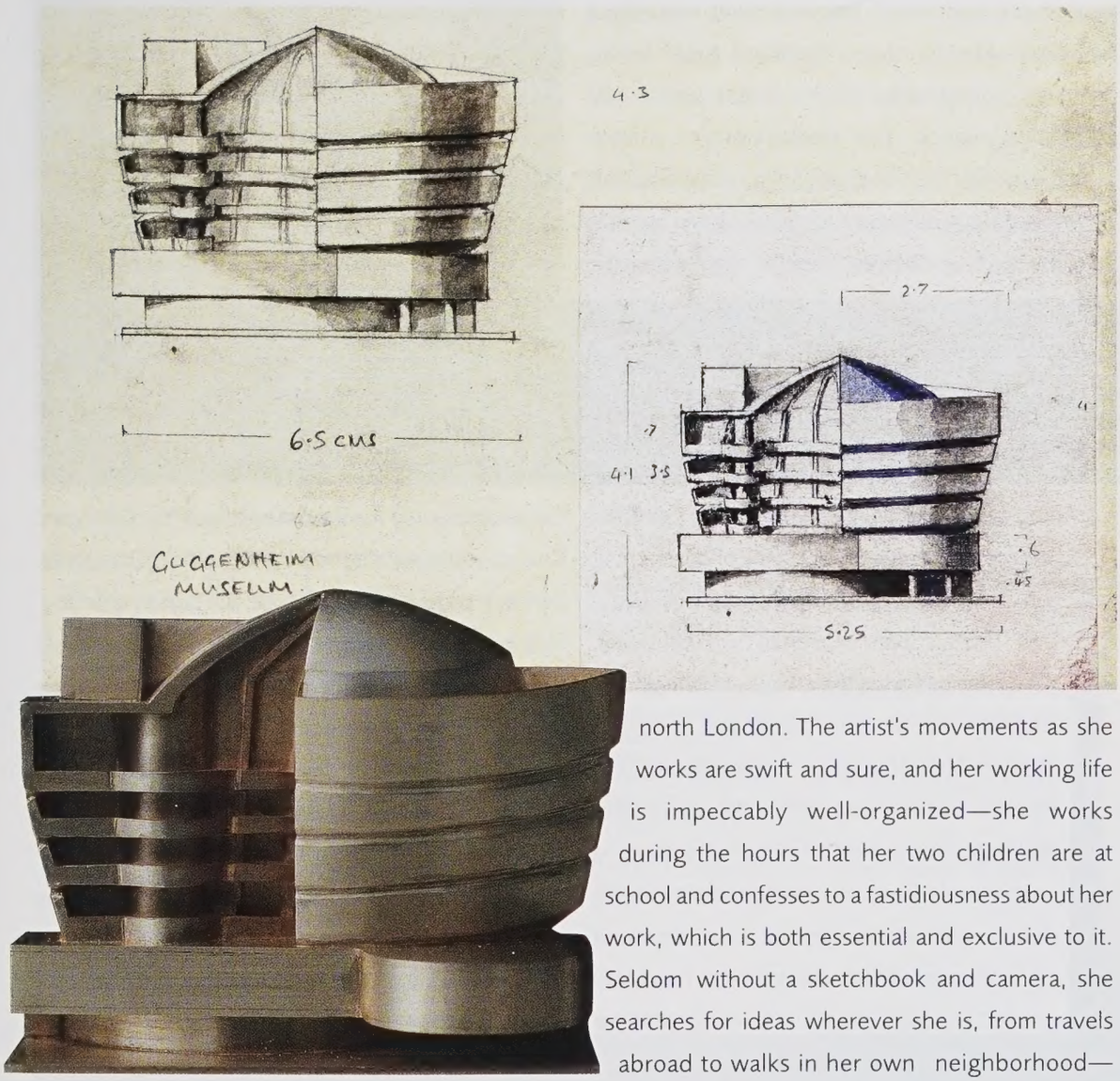
Most of Ambery-Smith's work, like the Globe, is

commissioned, and she is pleased to count architects amongst the collectors and admirers of her work. They often have their buildings recreated as a piece of her jewelry for their wives.

Working on commission sometimes leads her into areas she has not previously considered. A recent request for cufflinks to be based on a house inspired by ancient Egyptian tomb decoration opened up for her a previously unexplored world of Egyptian art. In all commissioned work it is critical that the original brief is clear and workable and that any practical purpose is defined. There must also be freedom for the artist to interpret as appropriate. On one occasion for example, in order to standardize the height of salt and pepper pots based on two different Venetian houses, it was necessary to adjust the proportions of one of them. For this commission Ambery-Smith worked, as she frequently does, from photographs supplied by her client. For another, who had lost a much-loved house through a fire, she created a box based on the house, with a photograph as her only reference. This procedure of creating three-dimensional models from flat images, as in all of Ambery-Smith's work, requires mathematical calculation, visual and factual information, and imagination.

Her airy, light-filled workshop is at the top of a delightfully rambling Edwardian family house in north London. The artist's movements as she works are swift and sure, and her working life is impeccably well-organized—she works during the hours that her two children are at school and confesses to a fastidiousness about her work, which is both essential and exclusive to it. Seldom without a sketchbook and camera, she searches for ideas wherever she is, from travels abroad to walks in her own neighborhood—from French and Tuscan medieval villages and American and Russian cities to Edwardian houses in London. Her drawings, which are finely finished with color washes, are precise and carefully made and are becoming collectable.

Like many makers, Ambery-Smith learns new manufacturing processes as the occasion demands. Her production techniques are laborious and time-consuming. When making a free-standing object such as a box or a pepper pot, she starts with a drawing, followed by a card model, to ensure that the shape is accurate and feasible. To achieve this,



Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1994
pencil, ink, and wash on paper
8 x 5 1/2"

Guggenheim Museum, New York
(brooch), 1994
silver
1 3/4 x 2 1/8"

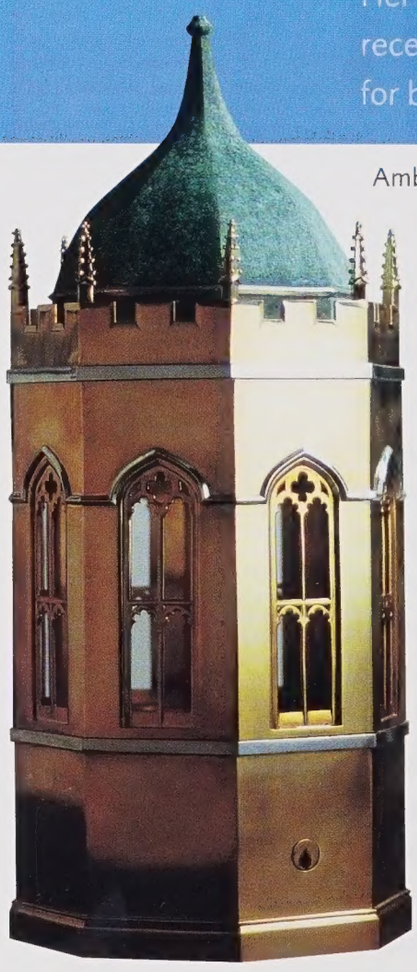
she sometimes has to adapt the design of the original, not to say cheat a little, to make an object that will be stable. In the making, her jewelry and objects tend to share the same general techniques. The basic forms and outline are traced over the image—drawing or photograph—and are then transposed onto a clear acetate film and from that photo-etched onto a sheet of silver, which is then scored, cut, and folded. Pieces are then assembled by silver soldering using a traditional mouth torch, although components of the larger pieces are sometimes riveted. The employment of a laser would expedite the photo-etching process because in theory one could carve the silver surface by laser at three or four different depths simultaneously.

for highlighting architectural details and roofs, domes, banners, and pennants. For the latter she sometimes uses the less traditional metals titanium and niobium, activating their color-rich properties by means of electronic anodizing.

Ambery-Smith's most frequent silversmithing commissions are for boxes of various sizes and condiment sets. The boxes are usually imaginative creations based on towers and domes but with no particular building in mind. To celebrate the births of her children, Ambery-Smith made smaller, pill-box sized boxes, which were later used as receptacles for their baby teeth.

Ambery-Smith received her first liturgical commission in 1988: a Sacrament box to contain the sacred bread for the 500-year-old St. George's Chapel, Windsor. Based on the castle's Octagonal Tower, it was a parting gift from the Surveyor of the Fabric of the Building and resides in a side chapel serving the 700-member community of the castle, one of the royal residences.

Her open-minded approach to new departures is further confirmed by her recent adoption of the sleek abstractions and minimal shapes of modern bridges for brooch forms.



Sacrament Box (at St George's Chapel, Windsor), 1988
silver, brass
17 3/4 x 5 1/2"

Ambery-Smith, however, continues to employ the lengthier process of classic photo-etching since the laser process is more successful with brass, copper or bronze than with silver. Once she has done the artwork for the photo-etching she can then adapt and reduce a brooch, for instance, on a photocopier to a smaller version for cuff links, pins, and earrings. Thus, from the same drawing a number of pieces of jewelry can be made from one sheet of silver. She is not interested in computer-aided design—its machine-perfect precision would look wrong with her work. She prefers to work like traditional craftsmen and believes that the resulting imperfections and variations make each piece unique. And, like traditional craftsmen, she generally has an assistant and she enjoys the one-to-one teaching that involves.

The majority of her work is one-off, but she does produce some very limited editions. Most of the processes, including casting and repoussé, are undertaken in her own well-equipped workshop, although she has to send out specialist work such as engraving, enameling, gilding, and gem-setting. Her basic material is silver with red or yellow gold

Energetic, dedicated, and always alert to new ideas and challenges, Ambery-Smith admits she is now more interested in contemporary and future architecture. She has been looking at twentieth- and twenty-first-century architecture since the early 1980s, when she produced her first modern pieces based on the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool and the Houston towers. She particularly admires Daniel Libeskind's work, responding to what she feels is a human and emotional connection in his buildings. Her silver brooch based on Libeskind's controversial plan for "The Spiral," the proposed extension to the Victoria and Albert Museum, was shown at an international exhibition at the museum this year. She is now working on another, based on his dazzling new building for London Metropolitan University in North London. It is worth noting that the bold forms of these buildings—organic, full of movement, and in a sense dissonant—are in direct opposition to the

"The Spiral" extension for the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (brooch), 2004
silver
1 1/2 x 1 1/4"

balance, harmony, and classicism that many have come to associate with Ambery-Smith's output.

Ambery-Smith is also very attracted to the Art Deco factories and buildings found around the outskirts of London, and has been asked by one of her collectors to make a brooch based on the Hoover building, the star of this group. Her open-minded approach to new departures is further confirmed by her recent adoption of the sleek abstractions and minimal shapes of modern bridges for brooch forms. The bridges have excited the interest of a quite different audience from her architectural one, and have brought a startlingly different, cooler, and more strictly linear profile to her work. They came about as a result of a client, an engineer and bridge enthusiast, suggesting she should be "thinking about bridges"—she was unable to resist the challenge.

She is eagerly anticipating forthcoming architectural projects in London such as the proposed "Shard of Light," a triangular building whose long tapering point reaches skyward. Meanwhile, she has been focusing on plans and sketches of a radical new building, known affectionately to Londoners as "The Gherkin," which rises amongst the towers above London's financial district. Commissioned to make a silver brooch based on this, British architect Norman Foster's newest building, it will be interesting to see by what means, in a piece of only 2 x 5/8 inches, she will approximate the glass surface honeycombed with diamond-shaped windows.

But this, she feels, is her way ahead. ✠

Deirdre O'Day, a former curator of jewelry at the Victoria & Albert museum, is a writer on jewelry and fine and decorative arts and a BBC researcher.

1 John Rae, "Forging Links," *Building Design* 24 (April 1987): 24-25.
2 David Watkins, *Design Source Book: Jewellery* (London: New Holland Publishers, 1999), 125.
3 "Princely Magnificence," (exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1980), 126; see also figures 628A & 628B in Yvonne Hackenbroch, *Renaissance Jewelry* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 1979), 235.
4 *Ring: Enamelled gold with Hebrew inscription* (Jewelry Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London), museum no: 4100-1855.
5 Rae, "Forging Links": 24-25.

Severn Bridge (brooch), 2003
silver, gold thread
width 3 1/2"

"FROM A DIFFERENT LANDSCAPE: AN EXHIBITION OF JEWELRY AND OBJECTS RESPONDING TO THE NEW ZEALAND LANDSCAPE"

HORTI HALL, MELBOURNE
FEBRUARY 9-15, 2004

by TRACEY CLEMENT

New Zealand is a different landscape. Just how different depends on where you compare it to. But odds are no matter where you choose, New Zealand will be either: greener, wetter, or colder, and often all three. As fierce, beautiful, and unique as the New Zealand landscape is, the striking difference is not the landscape itself, but the intimate relationship New Zealanders have with it. Identity as a New Zealander seems firmly linked to a Pacific sense of place. Chris Charteris explores the landscape through stone carving, a literal and sensitive engagement with the stuff of the land. Although they are carefully hand-sculpted, his pendants appear to be natural rock formations bearing traces of erosion, salt water, wind, and rain—the same forces that shape the islands of his country. Strung on natural fibers, following the tradition of the region, these miniature landscapes act as a kind of compass always pointing to a Pacific home. As a nation of migrants (even the indigenous Maori arrived from somewhere else) New Zealanders know where they are.

New Zealand is a Pacific nation, but not one that is timeless or romantic. Like most of New Zealand's citizens, all of the jewelers in "From a Different Landscape" live in Auckland, the Pacific's largest city. This is not the Pacific of blue lagoons, volcanoes, and palm trees swaying in the breeze (although Auckland has all of these). This Pacific is a fruit shop selling kava and coconuts next to a strip joint, hibiscus bushes in suburban backyards, the national rugby team doing the haka (a traditional Maori dance) before each televised game—a vibrant clash and blend of cultures. This is the urban Pacific.

Jason Hall's *Gate* brooches neatly encapsulate these urban realities. Made from sterling silver coated with white house paint, Hall's gates mark a point where boundaries bleed and blur rather than fulfilling their traditional role of delineating borders in the suburban landscape. These gates have a slippery identity, and their highly decorative forms have undergone political as well as aesthetic translation. They appear to have been inspired by either European steelwork or traditional Polynesian spiral motifs. A bit like the duck/rabbit problem (even when squinting), it is difficult to manage both concepts simultaneously. But the point Hall is forcing us to acknowledge is that they are both, not one or the other. These pieces are a dynamic hybrid rather than a diametric opposition. This fluid mingling is evidence of New Zealand's cultural future as well as its colonial past.

The colonization of New Zealand (like all colonization) involved scopic, as well as physical, invasion. Driven by the ideology of the Enlightenment, in which the eye ruled supreme and to look was to know, men of science subjected new places and their peoples to intense scrutiny, unprecedented mapping, and invasive probing. It was as if by reverent observation and the careful tracing of a line the mysteries of the new world would unfurl themselves; as if once named, plants, animals, and people would be clear and pliant. Looking was a method of knowing and knowledge was power: the power to reshape and subjugate, the power to occupy and infect.

"From a Different Landscape" both acknowledges and subverts this colonial legacy. Jane Dodd diverts relentless Cartesian progression though tiny silver maps that collapse and fold, providing multiple potential destinations (and destinies). Both Areta Wilkinson and Tania Patterson direct their jewelry-honed powers of observation on New Zealand flora, creating near perfect representations in metal. Patterson's work in particular is indebted to a scientific legacy, her brooches are deliberately modeled after biological specimens. Wilkinson's brooches represent the leaves of indigenous trees stamped with their Maori names: *Kowhai, Kauri, Pohutakawa*. But the leaves are somber, blackened silver. Rather than mimicking life they are perpetually dead. These brooches tap into a long tradition of memento mori jewels, reminders in this case not of our own mortality but that of the fragile New Zealand environment in which native flora and fauna are threatened by introduced species.

All of the jewelry in the exhibition echoes the Enlightenment desire to comprehend through looking. But unlike science, which is rarely pure, this art really is pure science; looking simply for the sake of understanding. These New Zealanders are carefully examining their landscape in order to belong to a place rather than possess it.

Tracey Clement is an artist, writer, and jeweler currently living in Sydney, Australia.

clockwise from lower left
Tania Patterson
Field Samples-Fragile Things, 2004
silver, Perspex

Areta Wilkinson
Pohutukawa, Metrosideros Excelsa, 2004
oxidised sterling silver

Chris Charteris
Strata, 2003
basalt, coromandel Peninsula

Jason Hall
Gate Series, 2003
sterling silver, white house paint

"BASKETS: VICTORIA AND MARK CALUNEO"

YAW GALLERY, BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN
AUGUST 1-SEPTEMBER 4, 2004

by D. WOOD

Basket. The word itself conjures images of natural fibers woven to create pattern or express the beauty of woodland material. We imagine texture, fragrance, earthiness, connection to the primordial environment. If the word metal preceded basket, these associations would be replaced by impressions like cold, sharp, hard, rigid and shiny. To find metal baskets that inspire the same sensations as traditional ones is rare. Such is the work of Victoria and Mark Caluneo.

The Caluneos' recent exhibition included clones whose semblance to plant materials would lead visitors to think that the Yaw Gallery had deviated from its strictly metals focus. The baskets are made of copper, brass, and steel, yet the patinas applied to the wire and sheet constructions have mellowed them into forest products. The baskets' flexibility and relative lightness also confound the viewers' assumptions.

Mark's forms and palette are the more traditional of the two. *Vessel 7*, the largest of his grouping of six works, is textured brass sheet wrapped around steel wire and tied with copper. The individual "cords" comprising the shape's circumference have the thickness of willow. The lower portion of the vessel is controlled, with the wrapping making relatively neat horizontal rows. Nearer the top, the sheet tails escape, adding energy and freedom to the form. Reddish-brown and coffee tones blend with antique gold highlights. The latter is subtle, adding richness rather than gilt.

A remarkable addition to the exterior of *Vessel 7* and several other baskets is brass turnings. The knotted coils, in somber hues and occasional patches of turquoise green, give the appearance of aged moss. All of Mark's work alludes to the passage of time and bygone eras. *V Basket*, with its large open mouth, employs a decorative V pattern in a band adjacent to the upper edge—a motif employed by craftspeople for thousands of years. In addition, the composition's material is rusty chicken wire, a product of pioneering days, and the loose spiky ends feel like barbed wire or a crown of thorns. This utilitarian container, with its references to former times and tribes, might be found on the African veldt.

Arizona, a long, low rectangular basket, could almost be used to trap fish. It is formed of steel diamond lath that has been distorted and distended, with the original pattern only occasionally discernable. The top edge has been robustly bound with copper wire so that the rim is the only defined line in the object. Again, the exterior surface has growths of brass turnings. The total effect is of a raffia basket that has known abundant use. Rust is, appropriately, the predominant color, with brass adding subtle highlights.

Victoria's baskets are, dare I say, more feminine in their delicacy, brighter color, and techniques. Recalling female needlework traditions, *French Knot Vessel* is embellished with embroidery knots executed in copper wire, while *Host* is covered with copper buttons. The structure for both of these vessels is bound copper wire, evenly coiled in horizontal rows. Unlike Mark's more organic assemblages, Victoria's are deliberate and controlled. The rows may be rigidly packed or loose, or the vessel itself might look slumped, but the outcome is always precise and crisply executed.

In some of Victoria's vessels, the copper wire is naked and self-expressive—form and technique are the focus. In others, form is enhanced by the application of patina to create a range of tone from yellow through ocher to turquoise-green. In the case of *Host*, the varying colored buttons are stitched to a background of grayish turquoise—their color and shape provide an endlessly fascinating surface over which the eye can swim.

Aqua is the most dazzling piece. On the exterior, the color is punched up to the unmistakable hue of the Statue of Liberty. The basket has an open mouth and we can see that the wires that hold the buttons protrude into the interior of the vessel. The thin bronze-colored threads look wispy but when brushed lightly they reveal themselves to be spiky and sharp. The exuberance of this basket offers a contrast to *Noir*, a more self-contained form that is covered with tiny metal "feathers." This basket, too, has the feeling of an African artifact in its simplicity, utility and pattern of stitching; its patina, replicating charring, contributes to the sense of age.

Unfortunately, while the Yaw Gallery's concentration on metal makes it an ideal venue for attracting like-minded collectors, it did not display the Caluneos' work to best advantage. Rather than on wall shelves, the baskets deserved individual pedestals to be seen in the round. May future exhibits give these unique baskets room to flourish.

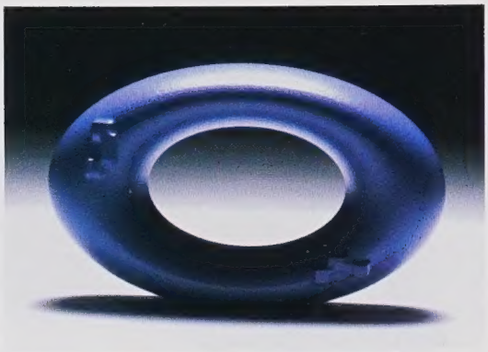
D. Wood is an instructor at Tucson Design College and a freelance writer specializing in fine craft.

clockwise from lower left
Victoria Caluneo
Host, 2004
copper electrical wire, copper sheet, patina and paint
12 x 8"
Photo: R.H. Hensleigh

Victoria Caluneo
Aqua, 2004
copper electrical wire, copper sheet, patina, paint
6 1/2 x 9"

Mark Caluneo
Vessel 7, 2004
copper, brass, steel, patina
15 x 13"
Photo: R.H. Hensleigh

Mark Caluneo
Arizona, 2003
steel diamond lath, brass turning, patina
8 x 6 x 20"



"NATIONAL METAL ART INVITATIONAL: VESSELS AND ART JEWELRY"

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE ART GALLERY, ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND
FEBRUARY 23-MARCH 12, 2004

by KENNETH JASSIE

At the invitation of internationally renowned artist Komelia Okim, who curated the show, ten distinguished metal artists exhibited their works this year at the Montgomery College Art Gallery. The impressive roster included: Sue Amendolara, Harlan W. Butt, Cynthia Eid, Matthew Hollern, Robin Kraft, Tom Muir, Paulette Myers, Dennis Nahabetian, Sarah Perkins, and Jay (Hyun Jong) Song.

As with most metal art shows, the objects vary enormously in terms of function, size, and materials. One gazed upon rings, bracelets, and brooches; candleholders, teapots, cups, and vases; as well as other less tangible items. What unites such a diverse body of work is the idea that things are not what they seem. Or, put another way, these metal objects often have the appearance of serving one function, or of being comprised of a certain material. But in this invitational exhibition, the observer finds that appearances are appealingly deceiving.

The jewelry of Jay Song is full of surprises on an almost microscopic level. The sterling silver ring entitled *Funeral* opens up to reveal metallic lotus blossoms, the petals of which are incised with Korean-Chinese calligraphy representing the seven major human personality traits according to Buddhism. Delicate work on hinges and interior parts suggests both the intricacy of construction and the fragility of life. The hexagon shape of the object and the rounded arches of the ring itself symbolically offer a personal reflection on the nature of life, death, funerals, and cemeteries.

Dennis Nahabetian presents some startling examples of how metalwork informs and is informed by other media, and how, chameleon-like, metal can mimic various materials. He makes his generically labeled vessels from a weaving process using thirty-two-gauge wire. In fact, Nahabetian's technique derives from a combination of traditional Chinese basketry and textile art. Musical notation and even puns are suggested in the pushing and stringing of the vessels; the polychrome surfaces, comprised of paint, rust, or chocolate evoke ceramic objects as well as discussion of the process. The ultimate result is to transform an easily identifiable and recognizable form into personal as well as "contemplative objects" that permit us to reflect on the possibilities of different materials and the function of things.

Metal artists can produce works of amazingly forceful character, especially when they transcend the conventions of craft art. Paulette Myers and Sue Amendolara transform their vessels and teapots into fine art, true sculptural objects with sweeping curves and elegant shapes. Even precious metals conjure up hardness and straight lines, but Myers's sterling and pewter vessel *Pathway* begins with a cup and then takes us along a zigzag path, unpredictable and anything but functional. Amendolara's teapot *Water's Surface* models itself on the undulating curves of waves, but its gleaming silver elegance suggests living things, or, to quote the artist, "a grand walk through life." A container becomes a concept and metal tricks us again with its elusive and plastic possibilities.

Cynthia Eid and Matthew Hollern use special high technology methods usually reserved for other media. Eid enlists a micro folding technique, more often employed with pottery, to create intricately grooved and textured surfaces on her untraditional menorahs. For his part, Hollern has displayed some traditional pewter pieces of candlesticks, shakers, and an oil decanter; but more impressively, he has produced a series of five bracelets, called "landscape bracelets," out of CNC milled urethane and latex. Using two different kinds of software and a milling machine that cuts the high density urethane, Hollern successfully creates colorful and weighty-seeming jewelry. He also manages to leave a residue of tool marks that allows him to remain truthful to his materials as well as the process.

Harlan W. Butt, Tom Muir, and Sarah Perkins made appealing and thoughtful additions to this National Metal Art Invitational. Butt employs East Asian and Native American motifs and designs in his vessels, including a rattlesnake coiled menacingly around the top of one of his pieces. Muir combines industrial and precious metals into the form of playful containers, most successfully with his *Watercourse* vessel, both a stylized image of a human hand and a functioning teapot. Sarah Perkins has offered lavishly colored and rendered containers and brooches. Vessels are her specialty and this is evident in her pitcher and cup set *Shores*. The ocean and earth colors associate the objects with idyllic thoughts and their lively tones also, one can imagine, facilitate the artist's goal of creating objects that promote social interaction.

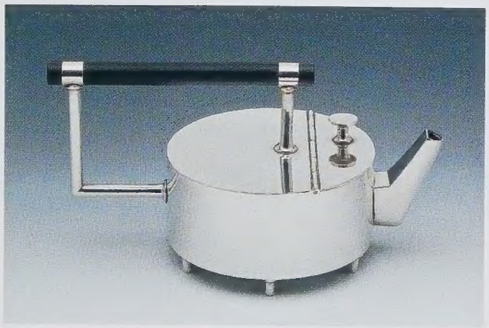
Finally, Robin Kraft's works provide extraordinary examples of the play of appearances. Kraft's *Midwestern Teapot* evokes a silo from Middle America. Although they are made largely from sterling silver, her monumental teapots have the rugged, grooved look of aluminum or steel sheets. Indeed, the process is industrial-like: the containers are shaped on a hydraulic press, using an epoxy steel conforming die process.

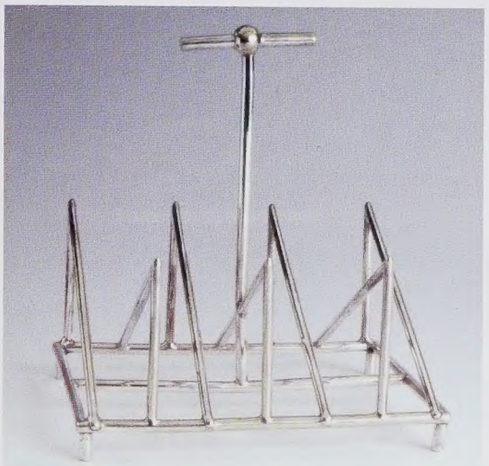
Kenneth Jassie is an associate professor of art history at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland.

clockwise from top left
Matthew Hollern
Landscape Bracelet II, 2003
urethane foam, latex coating; CAD/CAM object designed in Rhino/Production in Visual Mill and Roland 3-axis mill
4 x 4 x 2"

Dennis Nahabetian
Vessel #59, 2003
copper, bronze, patina with polychrome
5 x 3 x 3"

Robin Kraft
Midwestern Teapot, 2003
sterling silver
4 1/2 x 7 x 4"





"SHOCK OF THE OLD: CHRISTOPHER DRESSER'S DESIGN REVOLUTION"
COOPER-HEWITT, NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM, NEW YORK CITY
MARCH 5–JULY 25, 2004

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON
SEPTEMBER 9–DECEMBER 5, 2004

by CYNTHIA NADELMAN

If Christopher Dresser were alive today, he might well be designing for Target or Alessi. Thoughts of Michael Graves's stainless steel teapots, to say nothing of Russel Wright's production ceramic pitchers, as well as the ceramic sculptures of Betty Woodman and the glass ones of Dale Chihuly all came to the fore while viewing "Shock of the Old: Christopher Dresser's Design Revolution." The salient quality of that lineup of artists is its diversity—in style, materials employed, and design aims—and that is exactly the note struck by the protean nature of Dresser's accomplishment.

Dresser also foreshadowed the Wiener Werkstätte, Georg Jensen's work in silver, the Japanese-trained British potter Bernard Leach, and Frank Lloyd Wright—all of whom are brought to mind by his work. Dresser was of the Arts and Crafts era, yet fellow Britons William Morris et al—whose designs never went into production on the scale that Dresser's did—are far better known today, largely through the efforts of their chief proselytizer John Ruskin.

Beginning (and continuing with) wallpaper designs, Dresser proceeded to make cast-iron and wooden furniture and household furnishings—working with production companies in a variety of materials. While many of his pieces were signed with stamps, Dresser's name faded into obscurity until the 1930s, when design historian Nikolaus Pevsner revived his reputation.

Dresser lived from 1834 to 1904 and was the product of a period that equated science with morphology, or the study and description of structures. In this context, starting out as a botanical illustrator, he was considered a scientist, attaining the teaching role of professor of botany at several institutions and writing books on botany and the relationship between botany and ornament.

A product of and witness to the Industrial Revolution, Dresser was not resistant to it. But he was also steeped in the design imperatives of nature. Whether bilateral symmetry, foliage structure, or crystallography (one wallpaper design emulated the patterns of frost on a window pane), Dresser was sufficiently acquainted with these principles to later be able to deviate from them in the name of art and design.

Although Dresser paid close attention to nature, his education was solidly in design, and he had no difficulty reconciling design and its practical applications. Unlike elitist Arts and Crafts proponents, he was not tied to the idea of the handmade or the one-off. Furthermore, he was open to the designs of other cultures. A lengthy trip to Japan and exposure to other cultures solidified this impulse. The influences could be ornate, as in Indian decorative work, or fundamental and organic, as in certain aspects of design from Japan and South America. The burgeoning phenomenon of ethnographic museums could only have helped his research.

Notable among Dresser's designs for different companies were a series of teapots made of silver plate and ebonized wood. The enduring quality of teapots as a subject goes without question—but nowhere more so than in a country where a cup of tea is a staple. Dresser would have the quotidian brew served from nothing less than an alarming design statement. Bulbous or squared off, with spouts and handles set at surprising angles, there was little of the everyday about these silver-and-black productions. Similarly, Dresser turned toast holders into highly aesthetic objects, one example standing out for its minimal use of pegs to prop up the toast slices. Dresser also adopted mixed-metal methods from the Japanese, creating copper and brass kettles that took as their models large distilling kettles and their industrial like. As he made the self-described transformation from "ornamentor" to "designer," his work became more and more sculptural, sometimes organic, especially in his innovative ceramics. Some of these works are characterized by off-centeredness or drippy, eccentric glazes.

As the informative catalogue points out, it is fitting that this exhibition was mounted at both the Cooper-Hewitt and the Victoria & Albert. Dresser's career largely coincided with Victorian England's growing interest in design and with the creation of a museum to celebrate this interest. On his visit to the United States en route to Japan, Dresser urged this country to follow suit and create a comparable institution. The Cooper-Hewitt is the direct result of such an impetus, if not of his very words. Although we don't automatically think of Britannia historically as a fount of design, Dresser combined the elements of designer, researcher (stereotypically a more comfortable occupation for Victorians), and even beneficiary of colonialism, in that he learned from a broad array of cultures, some of which had been under British domination. In this he proved to be a paragon of Britishness.

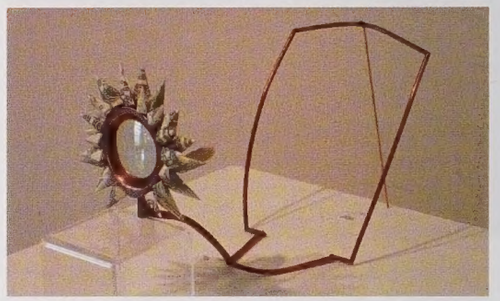
Cynthia Nadelman is an art critic and poet living in New York.

clockwise from top left
Bowl, ca. 1885
silver-plated metal
Photo: Michael Whiteway

Drum-Shaped Teapot with Hinged Cover, 1879
silver-plated metal and ebonized wood
Trustees of the National Museum of Scotland

Toast Rack, ca. 1879
silver-plated metal
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum
Photo: Matt Flynn

Hall Stand, ca. 1875
iron, marble, glass, brass
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum
Photo: Matt Flynn



"TAWEESAK MOLSAWAT: BLIND LOOKING FOR THE LIGHT NO. 2- THE INVESTIGATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY"

LAWRENCE ARTS CENTER, LAWRENCE, KANSAS
FEBRUARY 11-MARCH 16, 2004

by DARCI HANNA

Taweesak Molsawat's sculptures are untitled amalgamations of materials and social identities. In his show, "Blind Looking for the Light No. 2- The Investigation of Cultural Identity," the artist combines elements of his Eastern upbringing with observations of American society in finely crafted metalwork and mixed media pieces. Captivating brooches and detailed pendants glimmer alongside larger sculptural creations. The numbered works are randomly positioned within the gallery space, accentuating the disconcerting aspect of an environment that, like a foreign culture, is simultaneously familiar and alien. Although the emphasis of the show is primarily conceptual, Molsawat's ideas are expressed with astounding technical precision.

The artist moved to the United States from Thailand in 1995. While completing two masters degrees in metalsmithing and jewelry, he experienced the full barrage of emotional and psychological challenges that confront any outsider adapting to a new language and culture. This show is a bold attempt to express the difficulties of this cultural double-life through playfully interactive sculptures and innovative jewelry. Several of his works accomplish this by upsetting the viewers' typical gallery experience and making them acutely aware of their own uncertainty.

In *Untitled #1*, a precarious carpet of eggshells around a podium reminds the viewer of his or her physical presence in the gallery. In this small space, the eggshells are inevitably broken by wayward feet or intentional destruction and the disconcerting crunch of shells resonates through the gallery. Molsawat sees the eggshells as a metaphor for life's fragility. He "recycles" the broken bits by placing them in one of five meticulously crafted egg-shaped urns. The clear plastic carton holding the urns has a label on top with the familiar words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal . . ." in slightly mangled English. The phrase, which speaks to one of America's greatest aspirations, acquires a bittersweet tone when reproduced on the disposable carton. In *Untitled #1*, the artist seems to assert that, despite our cultural ideals, our collective human fragility may be what ultimately renders us equal.

The works *Untitled #5* and *Untitled #7* are also physically disruptive, challenging viewers to reconsider their interactions with each piece. *Untitled #5* consists of two racks of embroidered towels displaying definitions of "nature" and "culture." A two-sided mirror glowers from above. One side reads like a Buddhist koan, proclaiming, "it's as hard to see one's self as to look backwa[rd] without . . ." The viewer must break a taboo and actually touch the piece to see that the other side continues with the words, "turning around." *Untitled #7* is another touchable piece made up of oversized movable blocks. Each side of the cubes has a close-up of a section of Molsawat's passport, cartoon images, or green chalkboard. White chalk resting on the top tempts the viewer's inner graffitist. Both works incorporate pop culture elements and disrupt typical art gallery decorum by encouraging physical interaction.

In *Untitled #10*, the artist emphasizes another cultural difference between Thailand and the United States. Seven Advil bottles cast in white chocolate float on intricately decorated copper plates on a flesh-colored table. The artist piled crumpled Wal-Mart receipts beneath the table. He encourages viewers to taste the chocolate, tempting them to participate by actually eating a part of his artwork. The integers one through seven each adorn a plate and increase toward the seemingly unfinished end of the table. With only two legs and a half-formed mound of receipts propped against the wall beneath it, the table suggests the piece's infinite continuation beyond the gallery wall. According to Molsawat, in Thailand, drinking a glass of water and taking a walk is a common cure for a headache. In contrast, the mountain of receipts and chocolate pill bottle "meals" in this piece emphasize the American public's obsession with quick fixes and miracle drugs.

Molsawat's pieces give the viewer a glimpse of the artist's personal experience navigating the labyrinth of a foreign culture, first as a graduate student and now as an assistant professor at San Diego State University. His latest works in this show are an intriguing meld of traditional metalwork and jewelry, with unusual materials like chocolate, chalk, eggshells, and hair. Some critics might argue that his work lacks subtlety, but the sense of naiveté in some of his pieces characterizes the difficulty of straddling different cultural identities. It takes a lifetime to develop a sophisticated understanding of the subtle nuances of a foreign culture but, through his sculptural explorations, the young artist seems well on his way.

Darci Hanna is a student completing a dual major in art history and studio art at the University of Kansas.

clockwise from top
Untitled: No. 10 (installation), 2004
sterling silver, copper, chocolate, paper, wood
34 x 10 1/2 x 67"

Untitled: No. 8 (body interactive piece), 2004
sterling silver, copper, magnifying glass, dollar bills
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 x 10"

Untitled: No. 1 (object), 2002
copper, enamel on copper, broken eggshell, plastic, paper
3 1/2 x 11 1/2 x 4"

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opposite page, clockwise from top

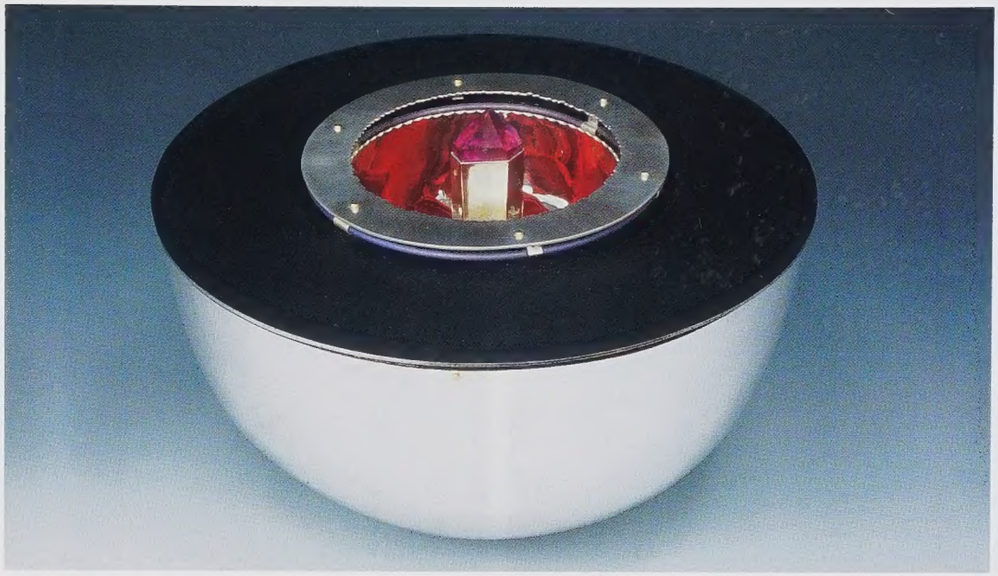
Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Cup with Oval, 1998
sterling silver
5 x 4 x 3"
Photo: Robert Storm

Biba Schutz
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
4 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Ron Boszko

(Summer 2003 *Metalsmith*)
cover: Manfred Bischoff
Brothers (brooch), 2001
Courtesy Joseph Kosuth and
Cornelia Lauf, Rome

Helen Shirk
Sustaining Sprit XXVII, 2000
copper, patina, colored pencils
6 x 23 x 23"

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
Photo: Todd Flashner



"PAULETTE MYERS: JOURNEY OF THE SOUL"

NEW WAGNER GALLERY, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT EDWARDSVILLE
FEBRUARY 23-MARCH 13, 2004

by LYNN COOL

Temple. Shrine. Sanctuary. These words describe a powerful, enigmatic space, achieved in this exhibition by the careful placement of a solid, thematic body of work. Not only does each piece hold the viewer's attention, the syncopated, yet rhythmic, spacing of tall vitrines pulls one back toward a horizontal, altar-like case. Throughout, one is struck by aura: the stage has been set, the audience's attention captured, with appropriate contemplative demeanor.

Myers relies on formal design elements, technical mastery, rich materials, and narrative symbolism to express her artistic concerns. Workmanship and craft are meticulous; one is not distracted by questions of wearability. Stands for jewelry addend compositions in important ways; Myers seems to be saying, "Yes, they function flawlessly—but focus on form and content."

Movement and transformation are recurrent themes. The gold rings, *Final Journey* and *Transport*, bring to mind a covered archway, perhaps used for ceremonial purposes. A long boat-shaped tourmaline glides aside wavy reticulated gold sheet, emphasizing the feeling of movement through the finger hole. Myers explores light and reflection in *Ceremony: Spirit Rising*, a sterling and gold tea service. The center of energy emanates from the teapot's inverted bowl, through which spout, handle, and lid emerge, punctuated with pearls, spirals, and gold squiggles. The double-walled, footed cups are mirror finished, referencing transformation in warped reflections of the grid bases upon which they rest.

Myers describes several vessels as a "dwelling place" for each memorialized subject. One special stone emerges from each bowl, signifying, quite literally, crystallized personal essence. While historical reliquaries were purported to contain bits of actual bone or a severed body part of a revered religious figure, Myers's vessels are contemporary reliquaries that symbolically contain an individual whose special strengths offer inspiration to the viewer. Two double-walled bowls, *Maternal Eternal: Power Vessel*, and *Spiritress Eternal: Power Vessel*, seem to be futuristic, perhaps otherworldly, reliquaries: impressively large, they impart a mysterious air. Each bowl is finished with an oxidized, flat upper plane, suggesting an alien, sliced geode. In *Maternal Eternal*, a craggy amethyst crystal arises from an unexpected bed of fresh rose petals, and the massive tourmaline of *Spiritress Eternal* projects above the dashed gold-on-silver patterned inner bowl. In *Celestial Aria*, a tall cylinder of graphite supports a footed bowl, in which segmented, silver wires spiral in beehive form around a triangular, bezel-set amethyst, suggesting power, protection, energy, and movement. Within the same display case, two brooches stand as sentinels: each columnar form is bestowed with a rare slice of tourmaline, and human character is conveyed by the tilted, pensive head of *Maternal Spirit*, which contrasts with *Paternal Spirit*, an upright, firmly planted soul.

Myers's newest sculptural brooches satisfy on multiple levels: somehow, all elements of fire, air, water, and earth combine in these works. Additionally, Myers wields three complex techniques: reticulation, kum-boo, and damascening. These surface variations, which Myers often incorporates within one piece, result in a rich counterpoint of texture and pattern. *Voyage: Spirit Bearer* brings to mind an Oceanic roof ornament created to protect from evil spirits. A flash of garnet tops its fluid body; its ruffled fin-like appendages splay out from scale-like patterned steel. In *Eternal Garden: Sea Spirit*, a coral branch cape envelops three elongated pearls, combining plant and human form. *Eternal Garden: Ascending Spirit* personifies a pulsating being whose radiating waves of reticulated silver flow into cutwork sections that carry the energetic pattern onward.

Spirit Garden: Light is a cross between Brancusi's *Bird in Flight* and a Victorian pomander. Constructed with multiple wedges and fastened to a central core, each section expands outward in breadth of form. As one circles this work, the varied sections offer dramatic, changing composition and play of pattern, all recalling waves of water or sound, reverberating and resounding to expand in impressive transformation.

Myers presents an admirable body of work that speaks about life, death, and the ability of the human spirit to transcend and transform. Within these 22 works, she weaves together multiple life experiences with impressive technique and design to deliver a unique voice with universal appeal.

Lynn Cool is a metalsmith and writer who lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

clockwise from top left

Spirit Garden: Light, 2002
sterling silver, reticulation silver, fine silver, damascene iron, 24k gold
4 3/4 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2"

Maternal Eternal: Power Vessel, 1998
sterling silver, iron, titanium, 24k gold, amethyst crystal, rose petals
6 x 10 x 10"

Eternal Garden: Ascending Spirit, 2003
18k, 22k, and 24k gold, kum-boo, green tourmaline
3 7/8 x 1 7/8 x 1/2"

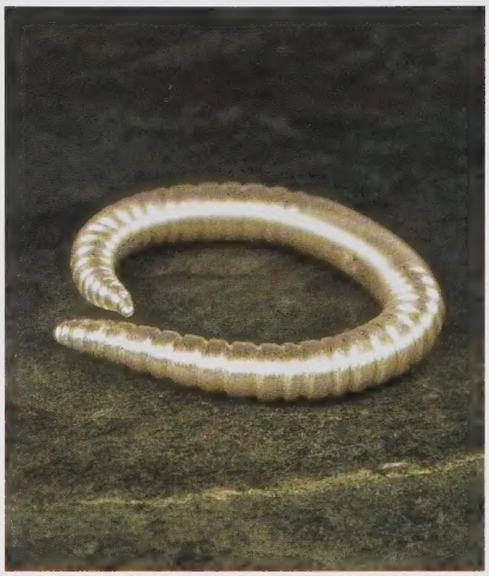
"KEN VICKERSON: SERIES"

NEW GALLERY, TORONTO
AUGUST 4-15, 2004

by BARBARA ISHERWOOD

A cascade of origami cranes greets the viewer at Ken Vickerson's exhibition, "Series." Behind the cranes, a panel reproduces the text printed on the paper from which they are folded. It's a quote from Nazi leader Hermann Goering, describing how to get the unwilling populace to participate in a war that only their leaders want. "All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

The fact that these words, spoken almost 60 years ago, sound chillingly like the mindset of today's political leaders is an urgent matter for Vickerson, a signal that we must change to avoid the mistakes of the past. A Japanese legend says that if a person folds 1000 paper cranes, a wish will be granted. The legend became known around the world through the story of Sadako Sasaki, a girl who began folding cranes after contracting leukemia as a result of radiation exposure at Hiroshima. In folding Goering's frightening sentiment into a symbol of hope, Vickerson sets the tone for "Series," six bodies of work that illuminate the process, products and necessity of transformation.



In the "Ploughshares" series, Vickerson tackles this issue literally. A commission by a church to turn a confiscated gun into a ceremonial trowel was the genesis for this group of seven garden implements. Ten photographs illustrate the steps from gun to tool—for an artist whose work is equal parts process, concept, and aesthetic, the way is as important as the what. The reforged, blue-black gunmetal is accentuated with sterling silver, brass, and turned pear wood handles. Each tool is handsomely mounted in a pear wood display case. Vickerson's streamlined visual vocabulary is in evidence in the sparing use of spirals and incised lines to enliven surfaces, replacing brutality with a stern beauty.

Following the same train of thought, the "Shattered" series takes fragments of bus shelter glass and repurposes them into pendants, that frame words representative of states of mind we could do without: Intolerance, Injustice, Preconceptions, and Stereotypes. As Vickerson points out, it takes a lot of effort to break a bus shelter. The angry person who broke this glass may have been a victim or perpetrator of these negative social forces. By using the remnants of a destructive act to create an object that points a finger at the causes of its existence, Vickerson turns violence against itself.

Three brooches from the ongoing "Tableaux" series speak to transformation on various levels. *Tableau V-Momento Mori*, a masterpiece of metalsmithing, was created in response to a gunman's massacre of 13 female students at the Montreal Polytechnic. A silver oval frames a delicately fused silver skeleton that lies within a blackened grave, a silent reminder that we must remain vigilant against the proliferation of guns—tragedy transformed into awareness. *Tableau XII-Generations*, a recent work, features a recurring character in Vickerson's oeuvre, a stylized head reminiscent of a skull or early computer game graphic. Here the head is multiplied and set in a frame, reminding one of how portraits of those long gone suggest the transformation of the individual present into the collective past.

The head reappears in the "Low Resolution" brooches, representing a variety of contemporary dilemmas in which change must precede progress. *Low Resolution 6 / Negotiation* has two groups of heads, in opposing colors of metal, situated around a table incised with arrows that indicate the dialogue intended to transform opposing stances into a mutually agreeable position.

While initially the diversity of objects in this show seems overwhelming, Vickerson's conceptual and aesthetic point of view ties it together. A predilection for combining different colored metals within geometric lines prevails, as does his exacting attention to detail—in the "Quatrefoil" series, the stylized leaf shapes, rendered in laminated metals, are admirably precise in execution. The reference to plant life here and in the "Ploughshare" series salutes the transformative power of the plant, which turns carbon dioxide into oxygen, and becomes food before returning to the earth.

The "Cultivator" series of rings celebrates a facilitator of this process—the worm who tills the soil, here rendered immortal as a sterling silver band. In three rings the worm supports a domed rock crystal that frames a word visible at an angle only available to the wearer—"grow," "bud," "bloom"—catalysts for the personal transformations that are the seeds of global change.

Barbara Isherwood is a Toronto-based writer on visual arts and craft.

clockwise from lower left
Ploughshare Series-Trowel, 2004
recycled guns, Swiss pear wood, sterling silver, Japanese paper, brass fittings
23 x 14 x 5 1/2"

Cultivator Ring, 2004
sterling silver
1 x 1 1/4"

Tableau XII-Generations (brooch), 2003
brooch, sterling silver, copper, fine silver, rock crystal
3 3/8 x 2 x 3/8"

"WEARABLE PARABLES"

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART,
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA
JULY 23-SEPTEMBER 1, 2004

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

Thanks to its portability, wearable art has the unique ability to tell stories with deeper social or satirical implications. A significant piece can accompany you to social functions, work, or the supermarket, resonating with your mood and encouraging other people to admire, even get the message.

All true artists are storytellers, and this show, curated by Cathy Kimball, ICA Executive Director, and Tobin Keller, Director of the Cabrillo College Gallery, offered a well-chosen distillation of the thought and passions of seven nationally known metal artists: Angela Gleason, Susan Kingsley, Keith Lewis, Bruce Metcalf, Dawn Nakanishi, Rose Sellery, and Lynda Watson.

At first sight it was a modest event, much of it retrospective, with several pieces already featured in earlier shows and publications. Most of the new work came from Rose Sellery, who included three pins in a series titled "Befriending the Beast," and Lynda Watson, who fabricated unique necklaces and bracelets in silver, gold, shells, and tiny drawings memoralizing her travels.

However, this show amply repaid careful study. As rich in meaning as an archaeological dig, it evoked powerful, often troubling vibrations of angst, scorn, and ambiguity, along with beauty and serenity.

Gleason's joke rosaries spoke clearly of her rebellion against her Catholic upbringing. She also showed three tiaras illustrating some difficult choices facing a young lesbian woman: a prison wall crown (not coming out?), a barbed wire "maternal" crown (no thanks), and a fake gold crown with a whopping safety-glass diamond (getting rich?).

What heroes or martyrs inspire a non-religious, spiritual person? Gleason made tiny haloes for such notables as St. Theresa of Calcutta, the murdered Matthew Shepard, and her chemistry teacher, who died of AIDS.

Bruce Metcalf tackled more universally unanswerable questions: where do we go when we die? What's inside us, really? His answer was to create a three-inch wooden pin of a woman with outstretched arms stepping out of a perfect miniature coffin. A second pin showed a screaming patient on a wee metal gurney, his flayed abdomen pinned by tiny surgical clamps. Grisly? Yes. Morbid? Probably. Hopeless? No. At least the woman, resurrecting, had a golden blindfold, while the guy on the gurney was sprouting flowers and pearls.

Susan Kingsley's work was straight satire, targeting the fetishes behind contemporary fashion and the historical pursuit of beauty. She showed twenty-two-pound lead platform shoes, with an accompanying x-ray and light box illuminating the resulting foot deformity. Kingsley also made beautiful, if grisly, necklaces of gold teeth and enameled nails, and a neat pun of a rack of stainless steel hand-shaped handbags.

Many visitors to the show admired Keith Lewis's gold and enamel necklace, with its detachable enameled ornaments, as a brilliantly fabricated recreation of a museum artifact. Only when they examined the ornament's subject matter did they say "Oh, my God!"

Lewis's classically perfect *Necklace for Zymrina* showed scenes from the life of a female prostitute from Pompeii, while a separate free-standing pin honored Maritimus, a male prostitute from the same period.

Lewis also celebrated alternate sexuality with a charm bracelet of enameled penises and dog tags, presumably past or present lovers. He has described his work as a protest against "cloying hetero-defined reality," but he is equally aware of the risks and losses among the gay community, illustrating his concern with *Ossuary Pin* in silver, 24k gold and enamel.

Dawn Nakanishi's work contributed a rare note of serenity, fusing a Japanese artistic and environmental sensibility. Her long silver pins with gingko leaves invited calm speculation and appreciation of natural beauty, while her *Building the Nest II* illustrated a lifelong goal of all of us—home.

The artists had a keen understanding of the additional punch provided by well-chosen and unusual media. Gleason used communion wafers and birth controls pills in her rosaries. Watson's necklaces and bracelets used shells from different beaches. Sellery's *Beaver Trap* pin featured rose thorns, while Kingsley's work included fur and x-ray film.

A pleasant bonus was how well several of the artists used graphics in their work. Lewis showed a necklace featuring tiny, framed drawings of tools, while his enamels reflected a well developed graphic ability. Watson included detailed drawings of shells, framed in watch crystals or Plexiglas.

How wearable were these pieces? Jewelry by Sellery, Nakanishi, and Watson could leap straight onto the body. The works by Kingsley and Metcalf are probably intended primarily for display, while pieces by Gleason and Lewis are wearable by people who relish their shock value.

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

clockwise from top left

Lynda Watson
Maui Birthdays (bracelet) 2002
14k and 18k yellow, red, pink and green golds, sterling silver, pencil drawings on paper, watch crystals, puka shells
8 x 4 1/2 x 3/4"

Angela Gleason
Halo for St. Theresa of Calcutta, 2001
silver, 22k gold leaf
2 x 1/4"
Photo: Hap Sakwa

Dawn Nakanishi
Building the Nest II (brooch), 1990
brass, copper, sterling, turquoise
4 x 5"

Rose Sellery
In The Night from "Expelling Demons" series (pin), 2000
silver, shibuishi, 22k gold, citrine
4 x 1 3/4 x 3/4"

"BARBARA STUTMAN: EXCESSITY"

GALERIE NOEL GUYOMARC'H, MONTRÉAL
MAY 27-JUNE 27, 2004

by SHELLEY POMERANCE

What's happened to Barbara Stutman the social critic, who specialized in biting commentary on all that is female and feminine, whose powerful pieces include the sensual flowerlike brooches that doubled as tampon holders *(On Being Female)*, the *Power Accessory* bracelet that bristled with spikes, the brooch in the guise of a red tongue protruding from hot pink lips, called *Sugar and Spice: Must We Be Nice?* Has she abandoned her political rhetoric, buried it, or simply become more subtle and sophisticated in handling her powerful message?

At first glance, "Excessity," a collection of 29 pieces, seems to be all aesthetics, no message, with its vibrant palettes of purple, gold, and emerald; shimmering pastel pinks, oranges, mauves; and a spectrum of pearly greys. Stutman still uses the textile techniques of spool-knitting and crocheting silver and colored wire to make her lacy jewelry; what's new are the seedbeads and miniature pearls that add sparkle, and the vinyl lacing she's incorporated into some pieces.

This series is finely crafted—with more delicacy and precision than in any of her earlier work. Despite the absence of gold and precious gems, Stutman has created something just as rich: she's invented her own precious metals, her own rubies, sapphires, and emeralds. But why, in our age of technology and virtuality, spend countless hours hand-crafting complex ornaments? This is excess in all its manifestations: the oversized pieces, the eye-popping colors, the obsessively meticulous workmanship. Years ago, Stutman visited India; the imagery she saw there, of sultans and maharajahs in their royal finery, has now surfaced in her work.

Maharajah's Madness is a king-sized bracelet, a mesh sleeve with a border of crocheted silver wire, a floppier middle section resembling a piece of folded fabric, and nesting in the center, a giant sparkling "stone" of silver wire glinting with

transparent seedbeads. *Maharajah's Madness* doesn't conform to the norms of jewelry as we know it. It's bigger, baggier, more extravagant, an inherent contradiction: an obtruding, nearly grotesque object made of the tiniest pearls and finest intertwining of silver threads. This is no *Power Accessory*. This is power itself, and power gone awry. Pair it with the *Maharajah's Medallion*, another large "gem" in tones of gray, silver, and white suspended from a necklace of transparent vinyl tubing; imagine an oversize coiled telephone cord hanging around your neck, springing up and down as you walk, clamoring for attention.

Less kinetic in that it lies flat on your neck, and doesn't bounce up and down as you move, but positively eye-catching, is a necklace of luscious "gemstones"—ruby reds, fruity oranges and pinks, all crocheted wire and seedbeads set in a lacy silver border. This piece is eminently wearable: large yet light, it shapes itself to the body, and fastens with ingenious magnet clasps concealed in the crocheted discs. Jewels fit for an Elizabethan royal.

Distinctly papal is a sober pendant of crocheted wire suspended from a spool-knit rope of black vinyl lacing. A large green oval "gem" is offset by six smaller ovals in red, purple, blue, mauve, and bronze, while at the other end of the vinyl rope hangs a single silver egg. In its sobriety and massiveness, this piece evokes power, grandeur, wealth. Yet these are just bits of wire and vinyl meticulously, laboriously strung together to create the illusion of opulence.

Stutman is not spelling out her message the way she has in the past; most of these works aren't even titled, she's letting you analyze the

work, and come to your own conclusions.

We associate wealth with weight: the heft of gold, the density of precious stones. Yet these imposing jewels are as light as lace to wear. Is the artist mocking ostentatious wealth, daring modern men and women to wear these big, bright ornaments, to hang their riches around their necks? (Even if they cost a fraction of real rubies and emeralds, these works are pricey all the same.) And if wearing jewelry is a way of displaying your riches, then Stutman is making a double entendre: If you dare to wear these jewels, you are also willing to let people see that it is all artifice, simply wire, vinyl, and colored glass.

Shelley Pomerance is an arts writer and broadcaster living in Montréal.

clockwise from top
Royal Neckpiece, 2003
fine silver, sterling silver, artistic wire, seedbeads, magnet
8 7/8 x 7 x 1 1/8"
Photo: Anthony McLean

Royal Pendant, 2002
artistic wire, nickel silver, vinyl lacing
5 3/4 x 5 x 1 1/4"

Maharajah's Madness (bracelet), 2003
fine silver, iron wire, artistic wire, pearls, seedbeads
5 1/4 x 3 3/4 x 5 1/4"

"HEAVY METAL"

COLUMBUS UPTOWN MUSEUM,
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA
APRIL 1-JUNE 12, 2004

by THORNTON JORDAN

The Columbus Uptown Museum, a branch of the Columbus Museum, featured four American metal artists in its recent show, "Heavy Metal." Three of the artists were former jewelers whose interests have evolved into larger-scale metal works.

The exhibition included four pieces by Albert Paley, who is well known for forged works that are massive, but still retain the grace and integrity of the contemporary jewelry that launched his career in the 1970s. His *Soliloquy* is a formed and fabricated table with wide, undulating ribbons of folded steel draped beneath a sculpted, satiny mahogony top. Two sculptures of forged and fabricated steel integrate blown glass forms: *Pilchuck #3* and *Persimmon*. *Interlace* was a multi-planed composition of laser cut steel.

After getting an MFA in printmaking from the University of Georgia, Elizabeth Brim taught jewelry-making at Columbus State University before going to Penland to study ceramics. There she took metalwork courses and felt a strong pull towards blacksmithing. She has a penchant for conceiving her art in a soft medium, then executing it in the unlikely medium of steel. In the "Heavy Metal" show, pieces that would ordinarily be made of fabric or leather were hand-forged with the surprising suppleness and flow of the natural material.

Brim's high-heeled steel shoes, such as *For the Life She Should Have Lived*, have become signature pieces since the late 1980s. She went on to explore camisoles, tutus, tuffets, and, in the 1990s, a series of steel pillows. Brim developed the impressive technique of "blowing up" her steel pillows. After stamping the surface steel plates to represent stitching, or tufting, she welds around the seams of two stacked plates, leaving a temporary section of pipe protruding as a nozzle. Heating the whole piece in a forge, she then inserts an air pump into the protruding nozzle and puffs up her steel pillows like warm dough. Gas-welded fringes of wire or of industrial steel "lace" complete the works, as in *Ring Bearer*. More recently, she has returned to her printmaking roots and is etching designs into her pillows and shoes with nitric acid.

Trish Ramsay, assistant professor of metal arts at Columbus State University, creates works in copper with chemically altered surface patinas. Like Paley and Brim, Ramsay initially approached metal through jewelry. Copper intrigues her, since it can be formed to a degree by hand, and it yields a wide range of patinas. *Solve* (2004), for instance, is a composition of multiple, small, copper "boxes" with a variety of patinas obtained from ferric chloride and bismuth nitrate. Some of the faces are stamped with cold-hammered twisted wire and other tools. In another *Untitled*, composed of larger boxes, she transfers pixilated photocopies of bird claws onto sheets of PNP blue, which are then ironed onto copper surfaces. The transfers act as resists to ferric chloride etching, so that the claw shapes are caught on the patinated surfaces like cliff hieroglyphs. More crystalized patinas on some panels come from copper buried in sawdust impregnated with acetic acid. *Four Ariel Views of Greenland*, inspired by a honeymoon flight over Greenland en route to India, is a four-panel work on copper suggesting bulging caldera in a snow-saturated typography captured by a thick white patina of bismuth.

Margaret Evangeline was represented by six 48 x 48" works of oil on aluminum. One piece from her "Friendly Fire" series uses aluminum panels that were prepared by swerves of surface grinding, then painted, pierced by gun shots, and surface-coated with a clear glaze. Among her weapons of choice for a piece in the series, which she made outdoors in New Mexico, are shotgun, rifle, machine gun, or pistol. Of the random bullet holes, she writes, "making an indelible mark is a sign of irrevocable action that is impossible to take back." She likens the results to "a series of forensic photographs." As the surface grinding reflects light, *Friendly Fire #19* appears glazed with a vertical sheet of water through which the explosive bullet holes protrude. As aggressive as the protrusions are, viewers feel impelled to reach through the glazed, watery surface to touch the underlying distressed surface.

Thornton Jordan is a retired associate professor of American literature from Columbus State University.

clockwise from top left
Trish Ramsay
Solve, 2004
patinated copper
51 x 43 x 3"

Elizabeth Brim
Ring Bearer, 1999
forged steel
10 x 81/2 x 31/2"

Albert Paley
Interlace, 2003
steel
20 1/4 x 30 x 5 3/4"

Margaret Evangeline
Friendly Fire #19, 2003 (detail)
oil on aluminum and gunshot
48 x 48"

"RINGS"

GALLERY OF ART AND DESIGN, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
RALEIGH
AUGUST 19-SEPTEMBER 26, 2004

by KATE DOBBS ARIAIL

The works in this Robert Ebendorf-curated exhibition, as might be expected, are madly various in style, material, and design, but have in common extraordinarily high standards of craft. One hundred and twenty-three artists from around the U.S. are represented here, and what could have been an overwhelming welter of tiny objects is instead a series of intelligent groupings that allow one to easily examine commonalities and contrasts among sets of pieces.

The rings range from classic, wearable confections to strange, clever, unwearable forms that are occasionally unrecognizable as rings. Quite a few bear the same relation to actual body adornment that ceramic sculptures in vessel form bear to functional pots—they are about looking, not using. One interesting ring shaped like a crab claw would stab you in the palm if you put it on. There are several pieces in the exhibition that would, if worn, rise so high above the hand they would require guy wires to hold them upright. Others are so wide that the "bezel" requires two or more hoops to support it. Beyond a certain point, the larger the "ring," the more removed it is from the hand's scale, and the more we ask that it function sculpturally. Paradoxically, the more completely a ring moves away from the hand and into the realm of the conceptual the less satisfactory it becomes; neither the idea's virtue nor the execution's virtuosity can fully surmount the drawbacks of tiny scale, suitable for a precious object in a case, but not for contending with the world.

There are always exceptions, of course, and one of these is an untitled piece by Shingo Furukawa; its simple lyricism negates other concerns. Furukawa has taken the lovely twisting inner core of a sea-washed conch shell and set it in a simple silver wire construction that gently emphasizes the shell's furled horn. A sea nymph or a mermaid might wear this ring, but the rest of us would be happy to see its unpretentious, well-balanced elegance resting on any nearby surface.

Many of the most intriguing rings in the exhibition are meant to be worn by humans, however. With its restrained, calm beauty and exquisite proportions, Whitney Abrams's *Roman Sky Ring* stands out among the classical pieces. The heavy mass of the thickly rimmed 18k gold band is balanced by the concentrated color of a large square-cut blue topaz and the play of squares and circles of yellow sapphire and hessonite garnet around it. The design is not innovative, but it is perfect.

More unusual, but still classical in its approach, is Raul Frisneda's *Atlas*. A tiny, beautifully modeled figure of Atlas in yellow gold arches backward, arms raised behind him—he is mirrored by his double. Between them they hold the world in the form of a magnificent golden South Sea pearl. The cardinal directions (at heads and hands) are marked with paired white diamonds. It is a mesmerizing piece, and the materials are so in harmony with each other that you can almost hear the three voices singing their refrain of gleam, glow, glitter.

There are many unusual materials employed here—non-precious materials—but few of the combinations are as pleasing as in Tom McCarthy's *Jan Ring*. Managing to appear at once dignified and slyly playful, this simple ring combines silver, steel, cement, and cubic zirconia. The cement has been oxidized, so that the zircon shoots its rays from a rust belt.

The exhibition includes several takes on the "poison ring" concept. Among the most interesting of these is Mi-Sook Hur's *Measuring Spoon Ring II*, in brushed sterling with a perforated finish. Instead of one hinged and clasped cavity, this ring has a stack of them. The tablespoon-sized cavity at the bottom of the stack rises off the ring hoop on two Humpty-Dumpty legs, and the whole stack has an egg-like shape. Of course, one could crack this egg at any one of the spoon-lids—and still put it back together again. Tara Stephenson's two pieces are also on the large side, but still wearable. They use the same basic design in different ways. In *Sight #3*, the smooth lid raises to reveal a mirror and a sighting device: it is a miniature sextant. *Continuous Removal* is set with a Pink Pearl eraser, and opens to make a container for the eraser crumbs. Non-opening, but with much the same attitude, are Renée Zettle-Sterling's pair comprising *Survival Tip #11*. One of these massive nickel and silver rings is set with chalk, the other with chalkboard eraser.

There are many more wonderful pieces and whether of plastic or gold, cement or sapphire, pop-top or pink pearl, damascus or filigree, all testify to the makers' concern with the alchemy of material, shape, and image in the magical, if necessarily restricted, format of the ring.

Kate Dobbs Ariail is a cultural critic residing in Durham, North Carolina.

clockwise from lower left
Tara Stephenson
Continuous Removal, 1997-98
sterling silver, mirror, Pink Pearl eraser

Raul Frisneda
Atlas, 2001
18k yellow gold, white diamonds, South Sea pearl

Mi-Sook Hur
Measuring Spoon Ring #2, 2003
sterling sliver
2 3/4 x 2 1/8 x 2"

Tom McCarthy
Jan Ring, 2003
sterling silver, cement, steel, cubic zirconia
1 x 13/16 x 13/16"

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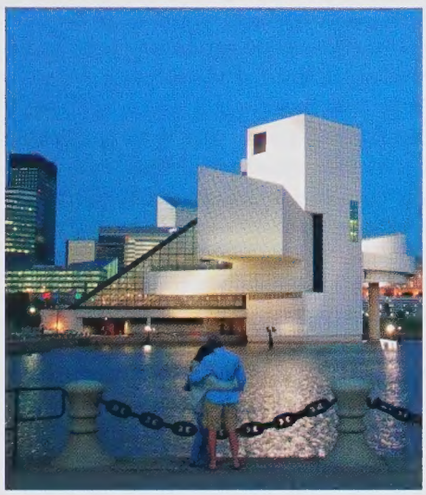
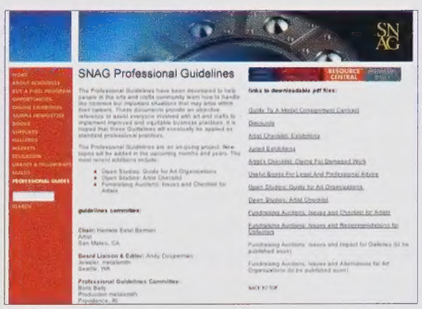
www.snagmetalsmith.org | by Dana Singer





3M, Inc. Sponsors SNAG 2005 Conference

For the fourth consecutive year, 3M, Inc. will be the official corporate sponsor of the SNAG annual conference, to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, from June 22 to 25, 2005. Our 37th conference is co-hosted by the Cleveland Institute of Art and Kent State University. The theme of the conference is "Intersection;" we will examine the confluences, points of departure, innovation and synergy borne of cross-disciplinary activity, from current craft education, fine art, fashion and culture, to industry, technology, and science. The conference features keynote speaker Gijs Bakker, 12 presentations, 10 exhibitions, and a final night party at the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame. The conference is also funded in part by Rio Grande.

Metalsmith's curated *Exhibition in Print* in 2005

The Exhibition in Print in 2005 will be co-curated by Boris Bally, designer and metalsmith, and Rosanne Raab, independent curator and collection advisor. The title of the issue is "Flatware: Function + Fantasy," and will focus on place settings—knife-fork-spoon and comparable eating implements—with a limited number of serving pieces. The curators intend to challenge the boundaries between handmade and machine produced, and between the poetic and the practical.

SNAG Publishes Second Installment of Professional Guidelines

SNAG has published the second installment of the Professional Guidelines created by Harriete Estel Berman, and a stellar committee of professionals, and edited by Andy Cooperman, studio jeweler. The new installment addresses open studio events and fundraising auctions from the perspectives of artists, galleries, collectors, and arts organizations, and includes an updated bibliography of legal and professional advice. The first installment of the Professional Guidelines was published two years ago and has been adopted by many institutions. Those documents addressed gallery exhibitions, consignment, discounts, claims for damaged work, and juried exhibitions. The documents are available through SNAG's website at www.snagmetalsmith.org.

SNAG 2004 Workshop Grants Awarded

SNAG awarded four workshop grants in 2004. In the spring, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania hosted Harlan Butt teaching "Enameling on Three-dimensional Forms," and Metal's Edge Studios in Scottsdale, Arizona, sponsored Linda Kaye-Moses talking about PMC. In the fall, Steve Midgett taught mokume gane at Georgian College in Ontario, Canada, and Marcia Macdonald presented a workshop on "The One-of-a-Kind Object Versus the Edition" for the Extended Campus Program at Southern Oregon University. SNAG's workshop grants are awarded twice a year through competitive grant applications reviewed by different groups of professional jurors in each cycle.

Dana Singer is the executive director of SNAG.

top to bottom
Cleveland skyline from Lake Erie, including Key Tower, the tallest building between New York City and Chicago
Courtesy of Convention & Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland

Cleveland's North Coast Harbor featuring The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, host to the closing party of the 2005 SNAG Conference
Courtesy of Convention & Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland

SNAG Professional Guidelines web page at www.snagmetalsmith.org

Metalsmith Harlan Butt teaching a SNAG-sponsored workshop at Edinboro University, Pennsylvania, 2004

COMMISSIONS

by Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman

Katy Bergman Cassell

Swans, 2003

A pair of swans painted in porcelain enamel graces the master bathroom of Christopher and Mariana Cassell's new home in Harrison Township, Michigan. Katy Bergman Cassell, the couple's daughter-in-law, designed the enamel-on-steel mural for a prominent corner where two walls meet above a large bathtub. The Cassells originally envisioned a ceramic tile mural depicting wildlife for the site. Bergman Cassell, however, suggested using enameled steel for its durability and immunity to cracking. Working with her clients' preferences for horizontal orientation and a palette of

colors, the enamelist made preliminary sketches of herons, peacocks, and swans in the wild. The long-married Cassells chose swans as a symbol of loyalty and fidelity. They approved a sketch depicting two swans gliding behind reeds on a northern lake, recalling the swans they see occasionally on a pond near their new house. Bergman Cassell ordered two pre-enameled steel panels, custom-made to fit the corner site, and began painting thin layers of porcelain enamel onto the steel to create the scene. Using a sgraffito technique, she scratched through layers to expose color underneath, to give the swan mural "a linear quality" and a feeling of depth. After each layer of enamel, Bergman Cassell fired the panels in a giant conveyor-belt-style Ferro furnace at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, where she teaches part-time.

Katy Bergman Cassell
Swans, 2003
porcelain enamel on steel
28 1/4 x 66"
Commissioned by Dr. and Mrs. Christopher Cassell
For further information visit: www.trilliumcraft.com

Tim Cassell

Urn, 2003

As Erin Robinson watched her young husband John succumb to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, she prepared to fulfill his wish to be cremated. Conventional urns held no appeal for her, so she commissioned metalsmith Tim Cassell to create a vessel whose form would reflect life rather than death. Cassell sketched a range of shapes, purposefully avoiding the stiff, upright forms traditionally associated with cremation urns. Robinson favored triangular shapes and chose a design whose low tripartite base opens tenderly at the top, sprouting petals of sterling silver that enclose an 18k gold bud. Formed and hammered from pewter sheet, the bulbous base seems to hover above the ground, extending down for support in only three places. Cassell cast the sterling silver petals in six sections and soldered them together, then set the cast gold "bud" inside the petal enclosure. He soldered the entire top element into the pewter base and left a threaded opening in the urn's bottom to allow access. After six months' work, the metalsmith completed the urn for John Robinson's memorial service in January 2003. Cassell's botanically-inspired vessel evokes life renewing itself from ashes; Erin Robinson felt its design commemorated her husband's positive approach to life and offered hope amid grief.

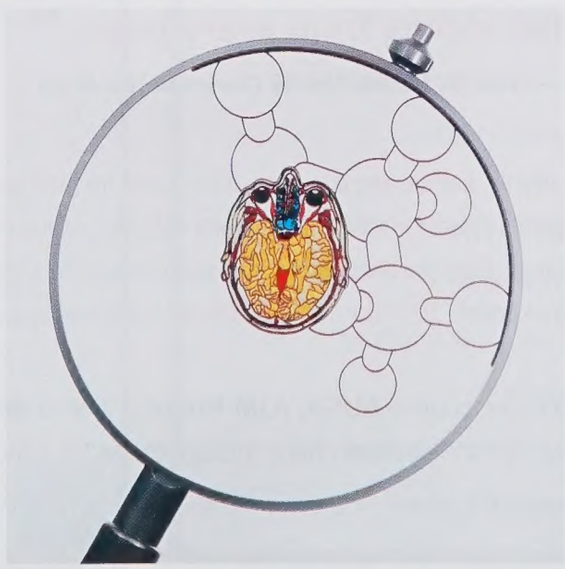
Tim Cassell
Urn, 2003
pewter, sterling silver, 18k gold
8 x 12 x 12"
Commissioned by Erin Robinson, Hudson, Ohio
For further information visit: www.trilliumjewelrydesign.com

Ralph Helmick and Stuart Schechter

Exquisite Corpse, 2004

A recumbent male body, its muscle, bone, and organs composed of richly colored stained glass, lies suspended in the central atrium of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Ralph Helmick and Stuart Schechter created *Exquisite Corpse* for the agency's new state-of-the-art facility in St. Paul, where forensic scientists conduct criminal investigations. Known for their "conceptual agility" and dual interests in science and art, Helmick and Schechter have collaboratively designed public art projects since 1994. After winning the commission through an open competition administered by the Minnesota State Arts Board, the artists chose the new Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's two-story atrium as the site for their sculpture. This open public space, where scientists and administrative staff congregate, boasts "wonderful sightlines" from both first and second floors. *Exquisite Corpse*'s "compositional armature" comprises 19 aluminum magnifying glass forms, signifying scientific inquiry. These forms cantilever upward from an elevated walkway that connects the facility's administrative and laboratory areas. Placed equidistantly across a twenty-six-foot span, each magnifying glass holds within its "lens" a stained-glass cross-section of the human body held in place by a welded steel filigree. The filigree designs depict crime scene evidence (such as guns, bullet holes in glass, tire treads, and fingerprints) or crime-solving methods (like dental x-rays, handwriting analysis, gas chromatography, and double-helixed DNA, symbolizing genetic research). Together these steel "clues" present a web of information that forensic scientists use when working together to solve complex crimes. Seen from vantage points throughout the atrium, the carefully aligned anatomic cross-sections coalesce into an entire male body, twice life size, of glowing glass. To create the figure's stained-glass anatomy, the artists utilized three-dimensional medical imagery made available by the National Library of Medicine's Visible Human Project. (Ironically, the body used to obtain these images was that of an executed criminal). Such an unflinching illustration of human anatomy may not be appropriate for most public art sites, but the forensic scientists who view *Exquisite Corpse* daily possess what Helmick calls "an impressive lack of queasiness." They share with the artists a "profound appreciation for gross anatomy—the beauty, strength, and fragility of our substance." By translating detailed scientific views of the body into richly colored patterns of stained glass, a medium traditionally associated with religious reverence, Helmick and Schechter imbue the mortal body with sacred significance. Helmick, trained as a sculptor, and Schechter, a mechanical engineer and skilled draftsman, developed the concept and design for *Exquisite Corpse*. Glass artist Abby Gitlitz and metalsmith Matt Koestner contributed to the project, joining technical coordinator Chris Taylor and project manager Sarah Rodrigo. The aluminum magnifying glass structures took shape through CNC (computer numerically controlled) turning of the handles and finials and waterjet cutting on the mounts. Work on the lenses' inner steel filigree required hand forming and delicate TIG (Tungsten Inert Gas) welding. After two years of design and fabrication, *Exquisite Corpse* was installed at the new Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension in January 2004, receiving a "gratifying" response from scientists and staff. Since the facility is secure, however, members of the public are not permitted inside to view the sculpture.

Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman is a freelance writer living in Michigan.



Ralph Helmick and Stuart Schechter
Exquisite Corpse, 2004
stained glass, steel, aluminum
8 x 5 1/2 x 26'
Commissioned by Minnesota State Arts Board's Percent for Art in Public Places Program for Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, St. Paul
Project Team: Abby Gitlitz, glass; Matt Koestner, metalwork; Chris Taylor, graphics
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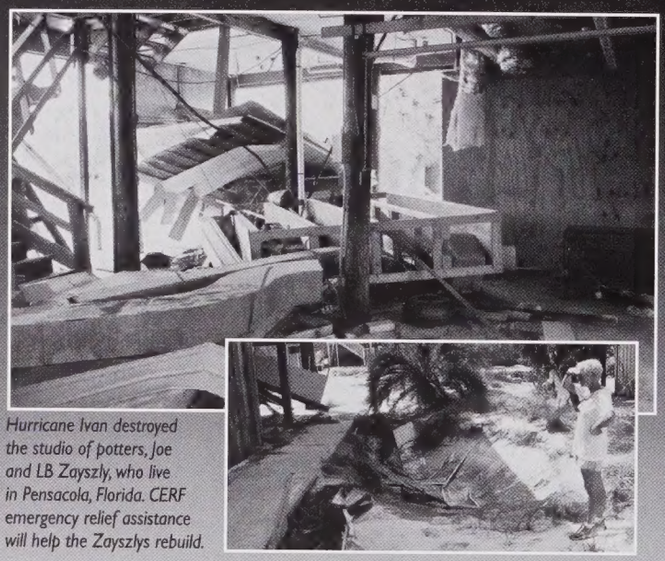

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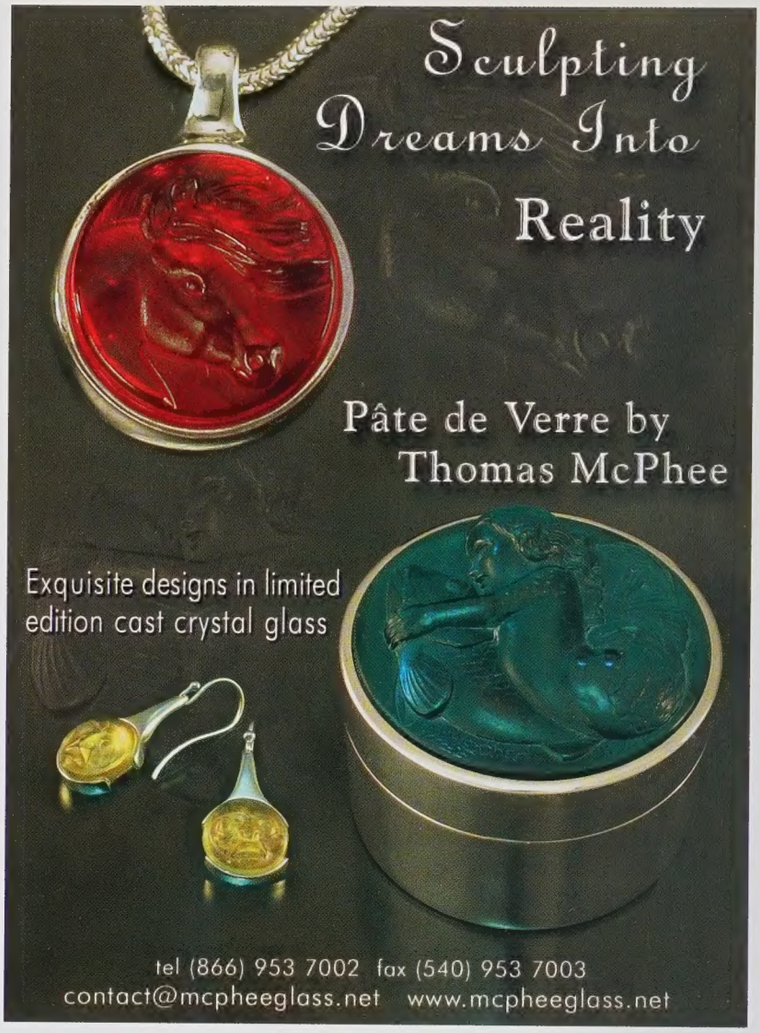
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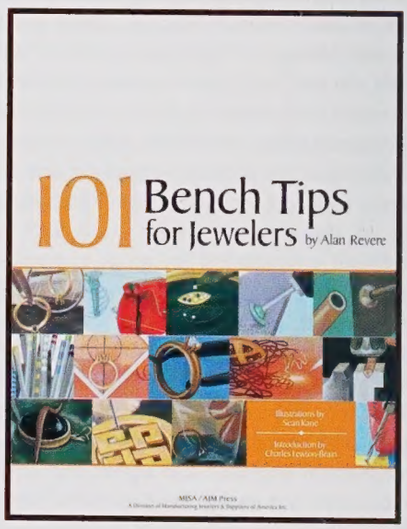

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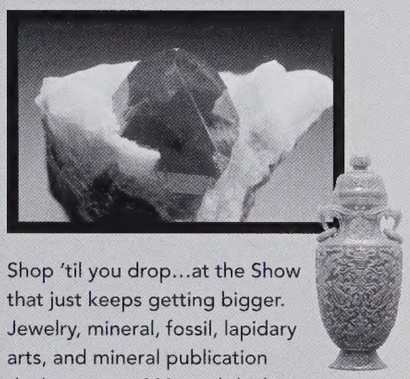

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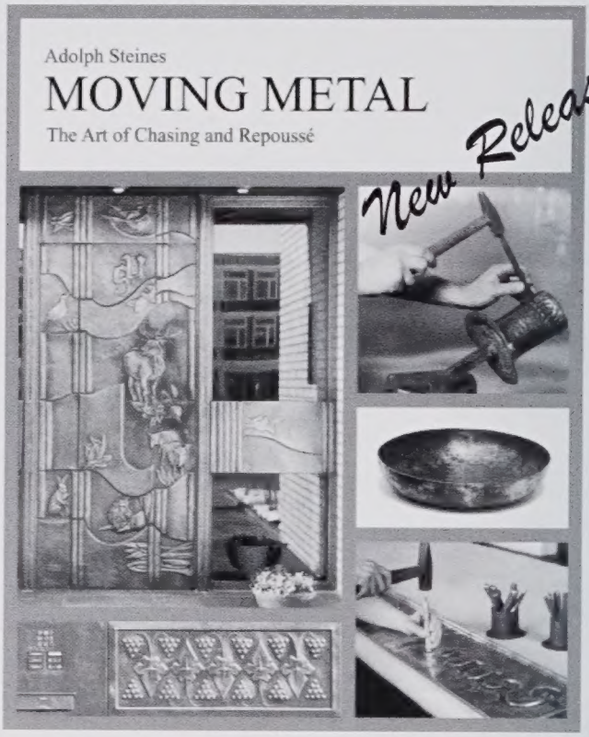

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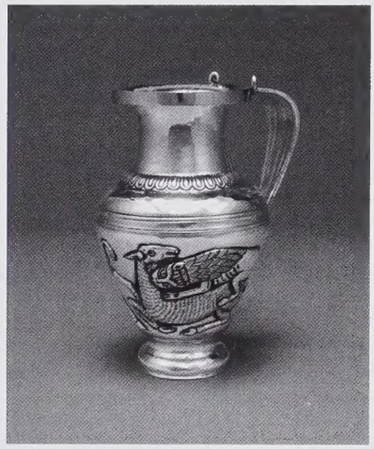

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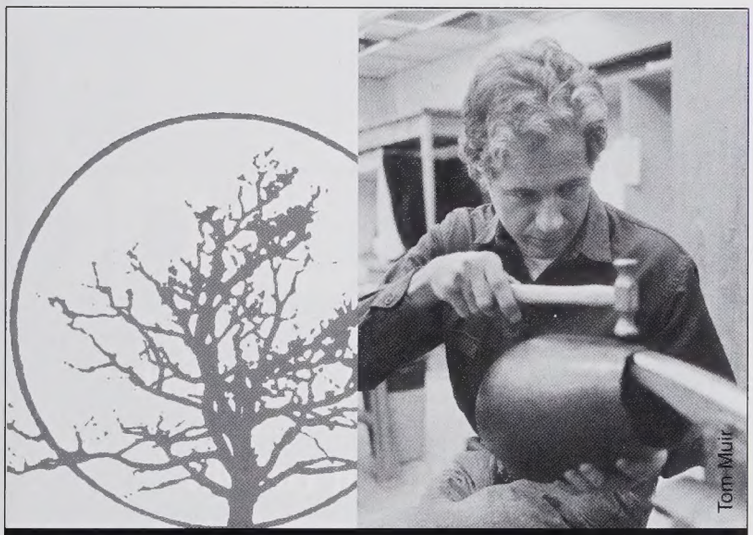

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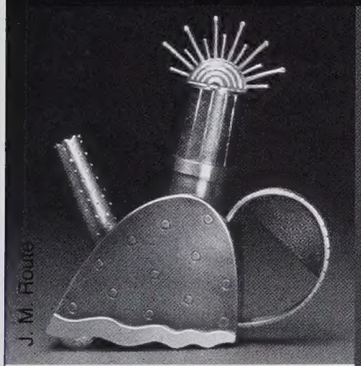

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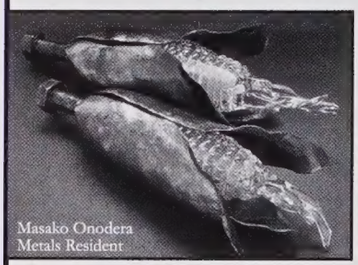

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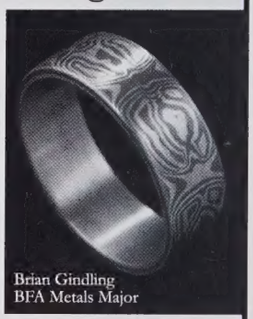

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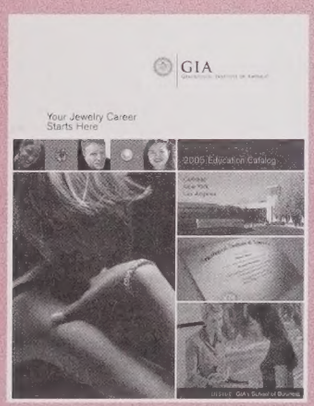

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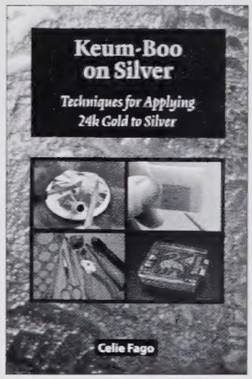

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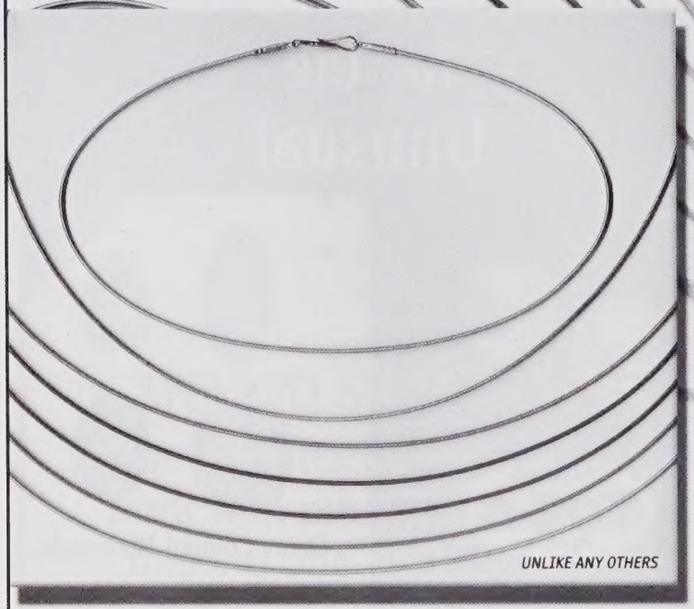

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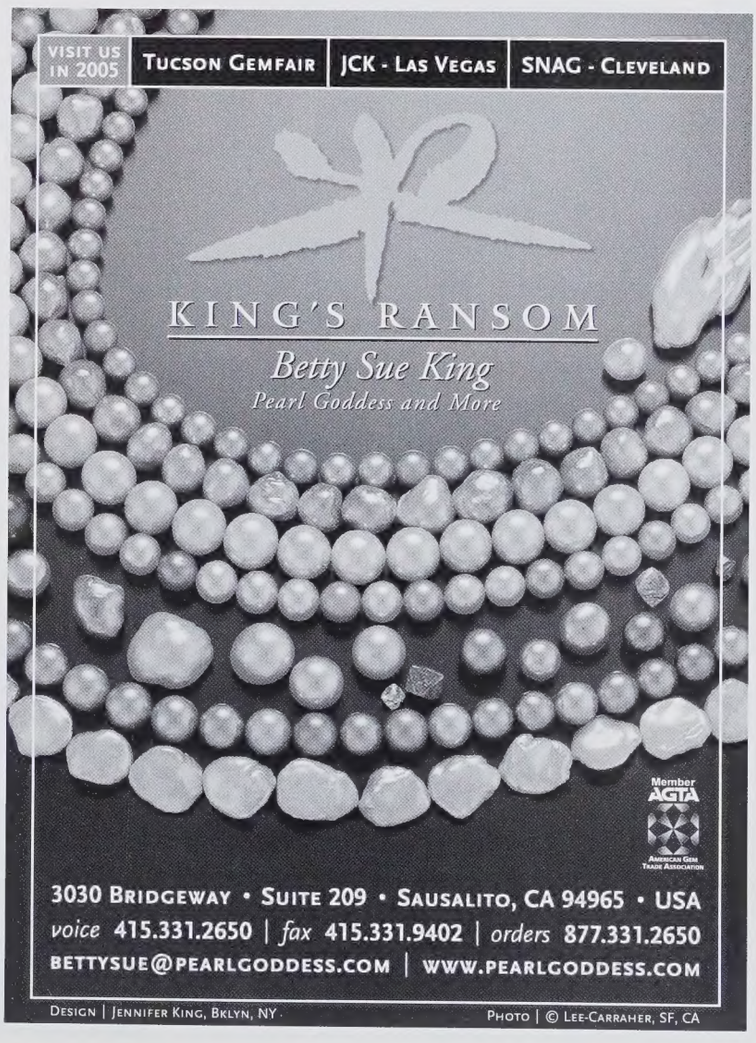
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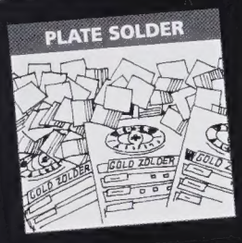

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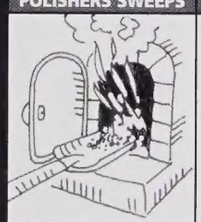

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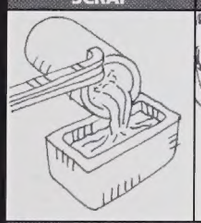

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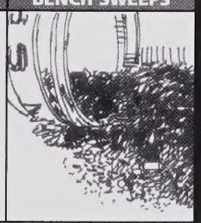

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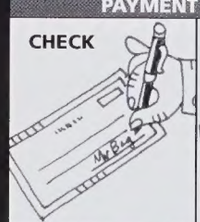

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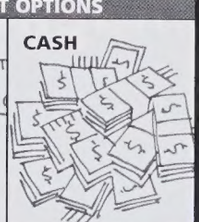

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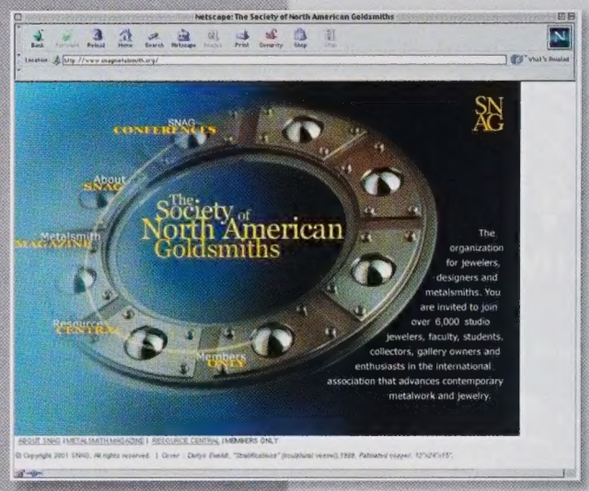
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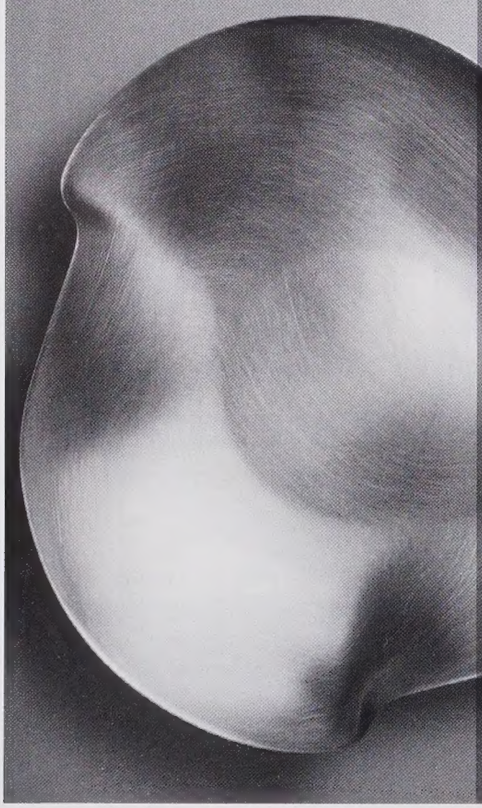

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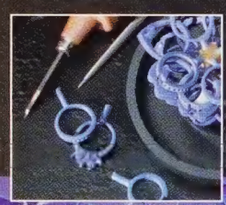

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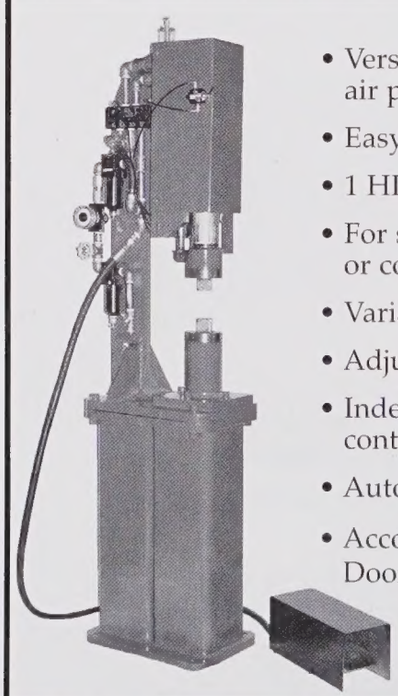

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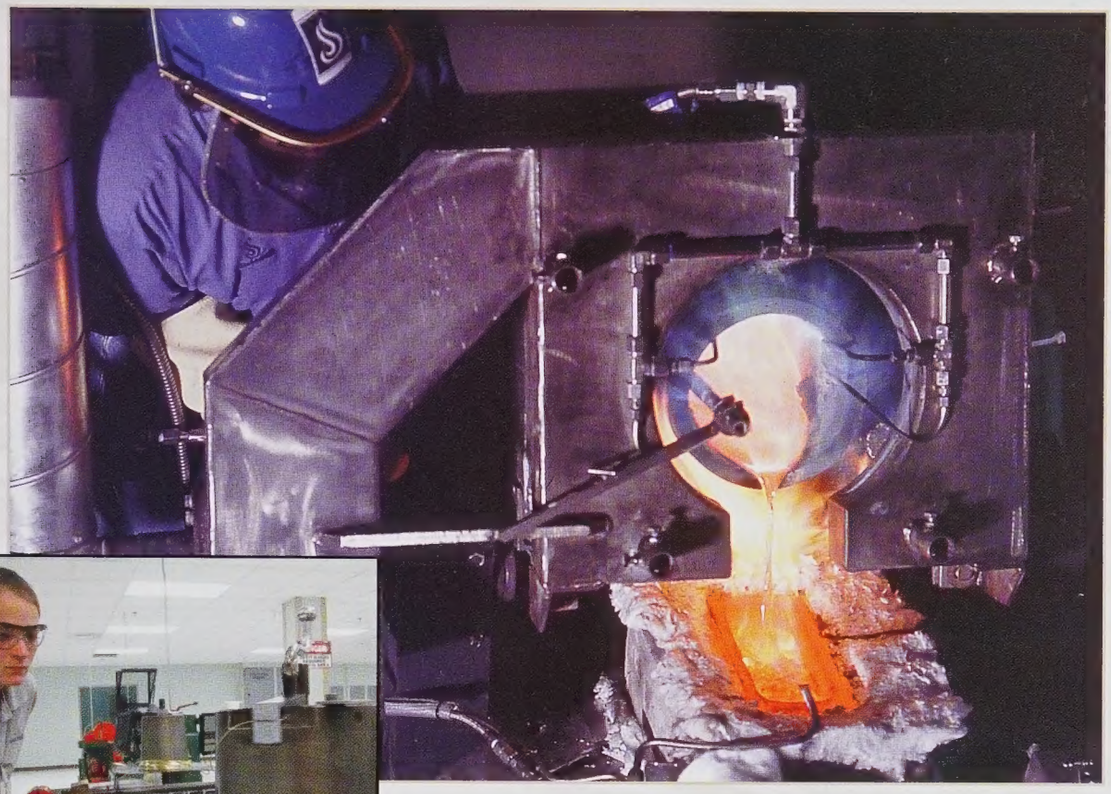

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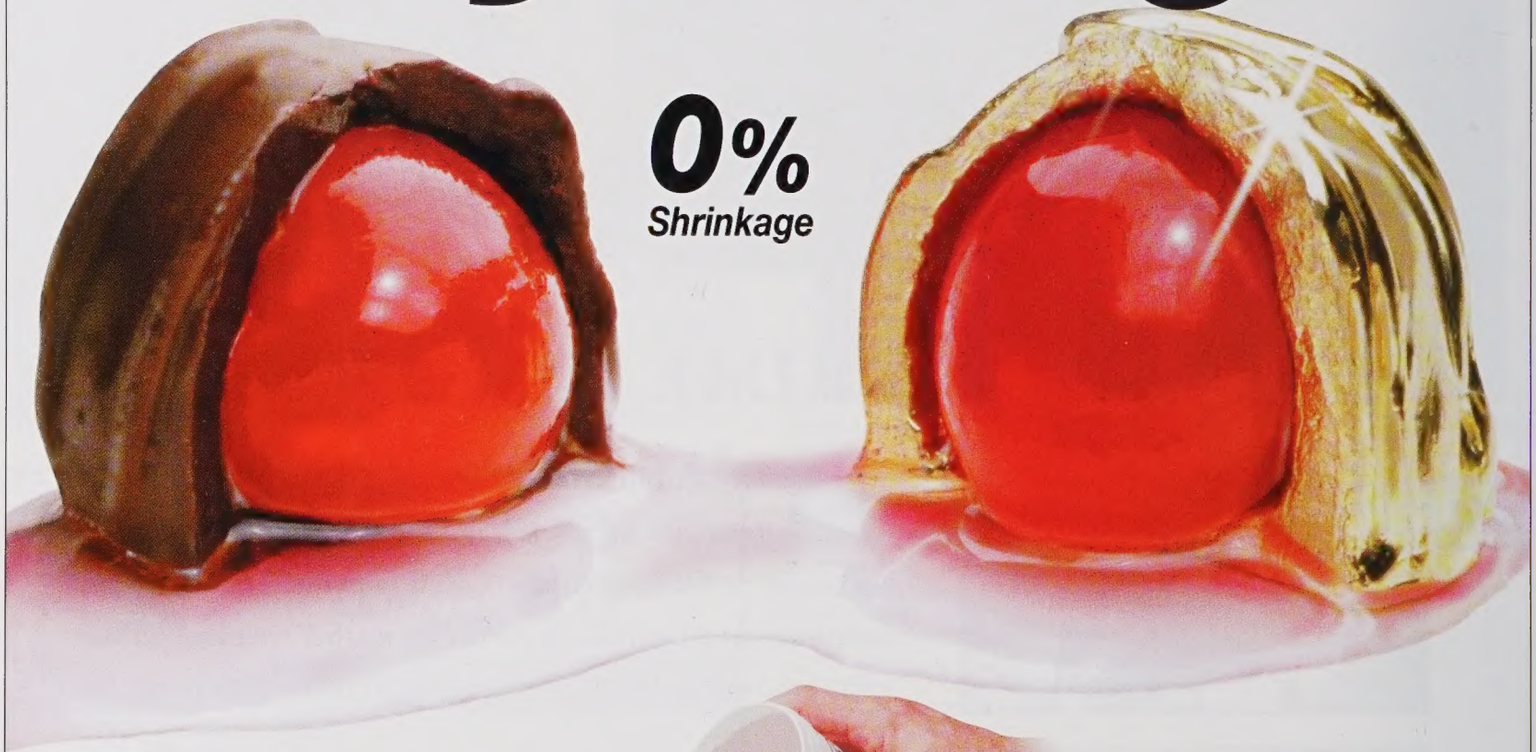

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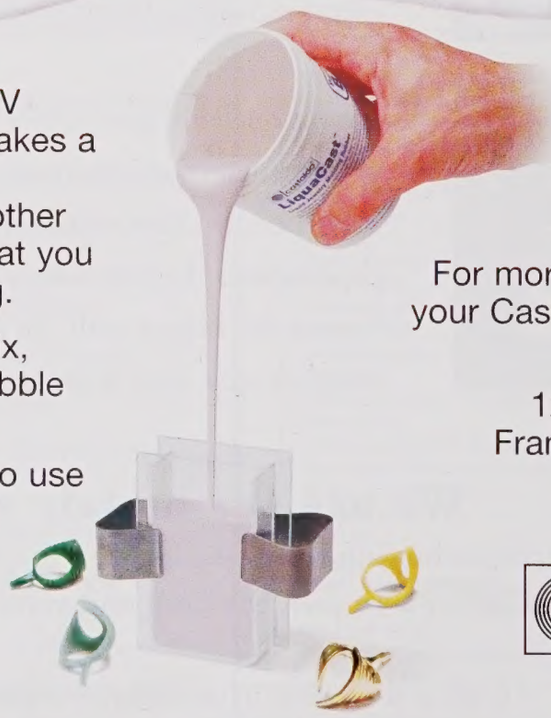

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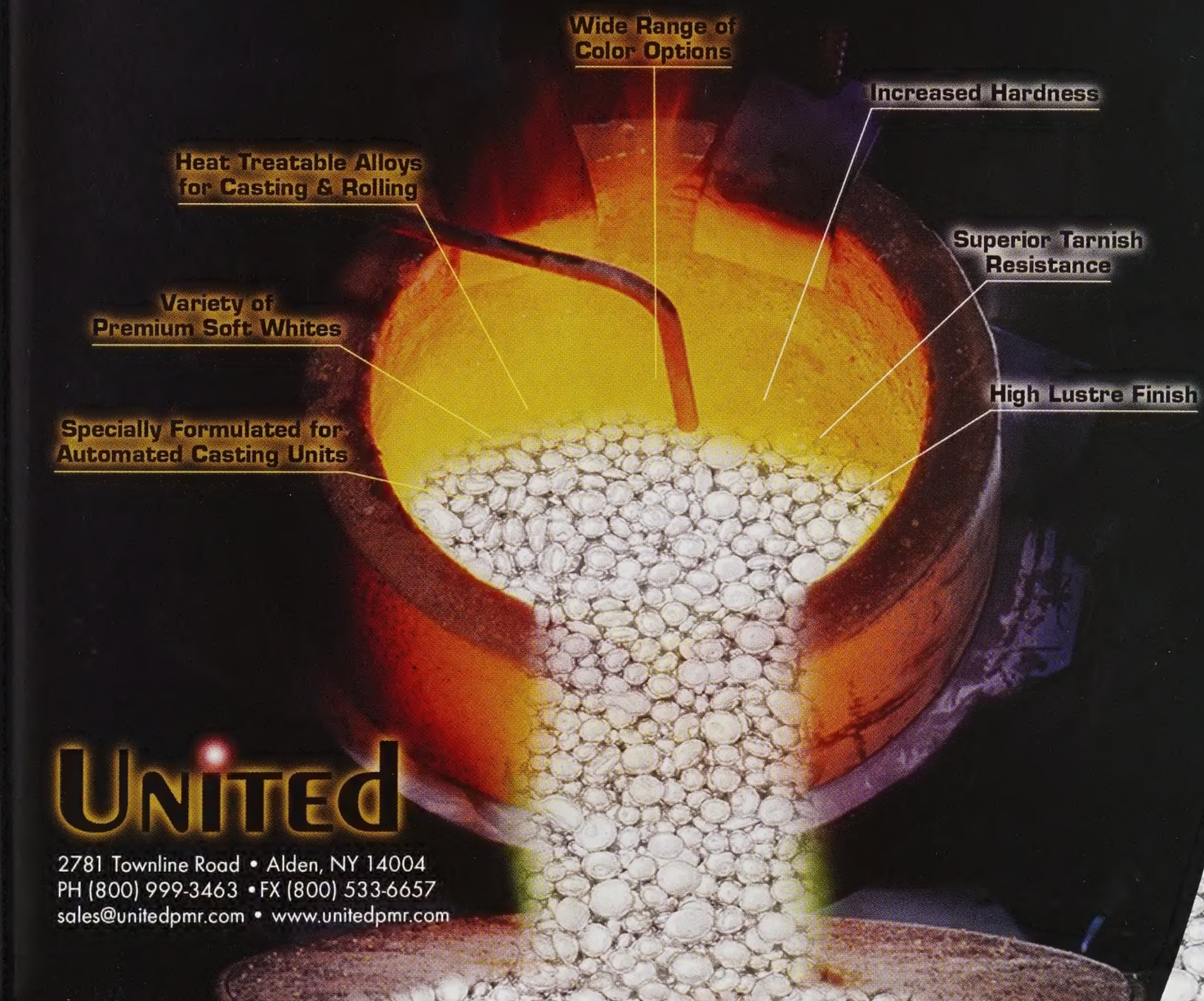
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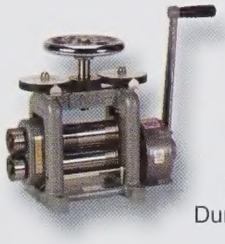

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